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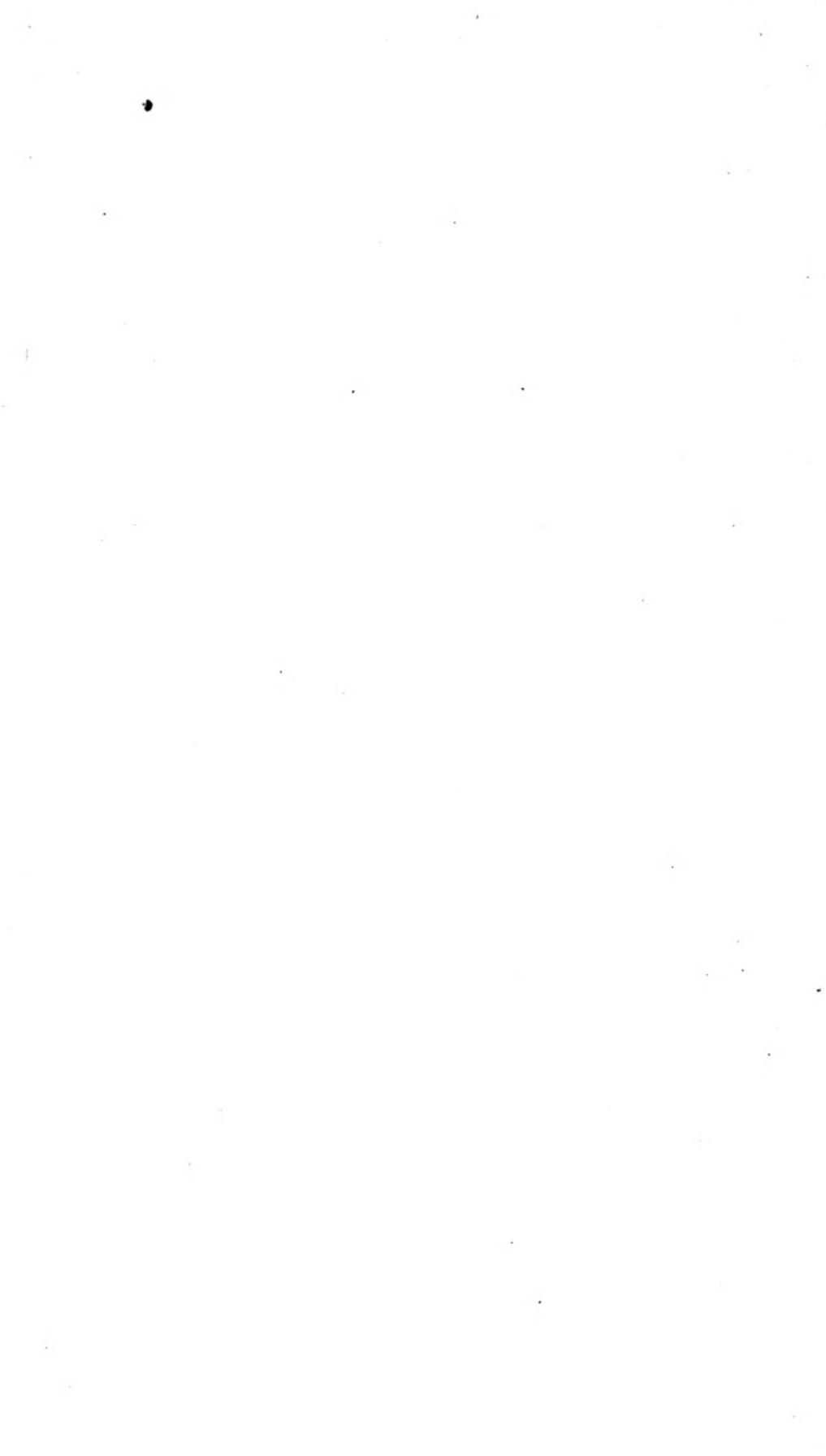
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THE CABAL.

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T H E C A B A L.

A Tale

OF THE

REIGN OF WILLIAM THE FOURTH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

JAMES COCHRANE AND CO.,
11, WATERLOO-PLACE.

1831.

In consequence of the creation of certain peerages, since this work was written, an awkward coincidence of names occurs, in one or two instances, which it is hardly necessary to say is entirely accidental.

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P R E F A C E.

KIND READER,

THERE is one great truth which many parts of this book were intended to illustrate—viz. the monopoly of political power is a curse, and not a blessing, to those by whom it is retained: it enervates and corrupts, it ruins and degrades.

The monopoly of political power, in England, is at an end for ever, for the people know their rights, and they also know their strength. It has been my wish to reconcile our late rulers to a loss already inevitable. I invite them to the

labour of honest industry, the rewards of which never have been equalled by the most splendid favours of ministers or kings. Our youth must be told that rank or power cannot now be won by flattery and cunning: our nobility, perhaps, may learn more honourable paths to wealth than a venal marriage; and let us hope that the names of English matrons will never more be whispered in the same breath with political intrigue.

Those who have been educated under the old system must forget the old habits. They may find this difficult, but they have themselves to blame. *They were warned*; they had many warnings: I will content myself with recalling one.

In the month of January, 1824, in times very different from the present,

the Westminster Review contained the following words, dictated by an ardent mind, and which a firm conviction of the invincible power of truth would almost seem to have inspired with the spirit of prophecy.

“ The intelligence created by education must ere long obtain that extension of the elective franchise, for the use of which it is so well qualified, which constitutes, indeed, the difference between a freeman and a slave, and by which alone the many can recover or secure their rights and interests against the ambition, the venality, or the servility of the few.”

Let it be confessed, that we owe reform to the education of the people; and for this, if it be lawful to ascribe

to one man what is due to the spirit of the age, above all other names, the English nation should for ever venerate the name of HENRY BROUGHAM.

THE CABAL.

CHAPTER I.

“ Plantagenet, I see, must hold his tongue,
Lest it be said, ‘ Speak, sirrah, when you should;
Must your bold verdict enter talk with lords?’ ”

King Henry VI.

His Grace, Richard Plantagenet, the present Duke of Lancaster, passes, with most people, for the male representative of John of Gaunt. Happening, the other day, to look into Debrett, I discovered that his descent is not quite so illustrious.

Thomas Tomkins, an eminent silversmith and

citizen of London, in the reign of George the Second, is his most remote progenitor, in the male line, of whom any certain record is preserved. Whether Thomas Tomkins had a father or not, is a matter of serious doubt in the heralds' college; but it is sufficiently established, that he died high sheriff of Middlesex, and left more than two millions of money to his heir.

Frederick Augustus Tomkins, his only son, was the richest commoner of his day. He purchased extensive estates in almost every county in England, and was supposed to have acquired the absolute nomination of thirteen members of parliament. On the accession of his Majesty, George the Third, he was created Baron Tomkins, of Tomkins Park, in the county of Middlesex, Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, and a Lord of the Bedchamber. But all these honours only whetted the ambition of Frederick Augustus. By degrees he became disgusted with the humble name of Tomkins, and would have given half

his fortune to conceal the obscurity of his origin under a more aristocratic designation. He conceived a singular method of gratifying his vanity. He had married a lady who claimed to be descended from a bastard of the house of Lancaster. By a fortunate accident he obtained possession of the ancient residence of the family. He made instant application to the minister of the day, and, very much to the amusement of the public, as you may read in Horace Walpole's inimitable letters, was created Earl of Lancaster, with leave to bear the name and arms of Plantagenet *only*. His son succeeded to the title, and, some years before the close of the century, was promoted to a dukedom.

In the mean time the wealth of the honest silversmith rapidly diminished. The splendid honours of his descendants were supported by an extravagant expenditure. Estate after estate, castle after castle, were brought to the hammer: the property which remained was heavily mort-

gaged; and the present duke is by no means one of the richest of our nobility.

One part, however, of the first peer's purchases is still entire—his parliamentary patronage;—and, during the last thirty years, that alone has afforded ample provision for the younger branches of the family. All the dowagers and spinsters have comfortable pensions: Lord Henry is Bishop of Nottingham, with thirty thousand a year; Lord Edward, governor of St. Kilda, with ten; and among the brothers, nephews, and cousins of the noble duke, there are three generals, two admirals, colonels and commissioners without number, a master in chancery, and a Welsh judge.

It is not for me even to hint that the talents of the Plantagenets are not as high, or as various, as the offices they fill; but I cannot help thinking that the thirteen members of parliament have something to do with their good fortunes.

Of late years, I know not why, this species of influence has been less effectual. Perhaps the minister has had less to give; perhaps he has been afraid of Joseph Hume. However that may be, the duke's sons have not been as fortunate as their uncles.

Lord Plantagenet is ranger of Sherwood Forest, or master of the Queen's falcons, I forget which—perhaps both. Lord William *had* a government. You have heard the story. Lord John's promotion has been rapid, but I do not observe his name in the list of sinecures.

The second son is *my* friend. My acquaintance with the rest of them is very slight.—He is a man of considerable talent, and has led a singular life. The public are familiar with part of his history, but not with all.

When he was recalled, his affairs were by no means in a flourishing condition. I do not know exactly what provision had been made for him in his mother's marriage settlement—

fifteen or twenty thousand, I believe; but all *that* had been spent twice over before he went out. I do not think he had sixpence at his banker's when he landed in England.

I dined with him a few months after his arrival in town. He had bought a very comfortable house in May-fair, magnificently furnished. Lord William is a most accomplished epicure. His wines were excellent; his cook unique. Lord William is devoted to the fine arts. I pique myself on a little taste, and have had some experience. The few pictures I saw that evening could not have been purchased for ten thousand pounds. Lord William is an elegant scholar, and a profound antiquarian. From his boyhood he has been afflicted with a most ravenous bibliomania. I have long suffered under the same disease, and could therefore estimate the value of his small library with tolerable accuracy. There were not six hundred volumes, and the value——but, unless you are members

of the Bannantyne Club, you would not credit my account.

From what source was all this money derived ? I am a quiet man and ask no questions. Lord William hunted; Lord William kept race-horses; Lord William kept a yacht. My income is moderate, though it is tolerably sure at quarter-day. I confess it made me bilious to see Lord William's yacht.

Credit is a great invention of this enlightened age; and the London tradesmen are certainly very liberal, especially to a lord. But credit, even in London, has an end. After the second year, Lord William's yacht gave me no further uneasiness, and George Robins sold his library and pictures considerably below their value. I bought a very choice Correggio for a mere trifle.

His lordship spent a year in Paris with his cousin the ambassador. He afterwards paid a visit of some months to his eldest sister the Countess of Rothsay, who was then in Scotland.

It was in Scotland he first saw Maria Cibber. When that delightful actress, at an enormous salary, was engaged to perform at Drury-lane theatre, Lord William returned to London, and was almost as gay as ever. Whispers most degrading to his character began to be circulated. It was asserted, almost openly, that she supported his extravagance.

However supported, his extravagance continued. To ensure his ruin, he became a gambler. His affairs fell into irretrievable confusion.

He had, indeed, one hope left. The Duke of Lancaster's thirteen members had been, time out of mind, sure cards with every ministry. They reckoned on them after the government boroughs. All through the bad times they had been staunch. They never ratted till the new men were actually in place. His grace, certainly, was staggered by the emancipation of the Catholics; for he is high-church to the backbone. On that question he waved his preroga-

tive, and left his nominees at liberty to vote as they pleased. Three of them were seriously indisposed, and Lord Plantagenet, to the astonishment of the oldest politicians, actually voted against the administration. But at every other division of any consequence, within my recollection, the thirteen were steady at their posts. In fact the duke made a point of it.

Such tried fidelity could not be suffered to continue unrewarded. Of course, there was a silent understanding that Lord William was one day to have something. He complained grievously of the ungrateful tardiness of the Treasury, and, I suspect, thought it a breach of the constitution to neglect a man whose family could command so many boroughs. But the ministry had good reasons for their delay, and he had too much sense not to see them, in spite of his complaints.

His conduct, while he held his government in the East, was still remembered. He had also

acted very imprudently since his return, in keeping himself too much in the eye of the public. His brother, Lord John, with all due deference be it spoken, is an ass. But he had never done any thing to attract notice to his promotion. Accordingly, he got on marvellously. Poor Lord William, on the contrary, was the observed of all observers. The favourites of a minister, in this country, should contrive to be as insignificant as possible.

His family pressed him to marry. Though not what it once was, rank still brings no inconsiderable price in the marriage-market. His sister, the intriguing Countess of Rothsay, is said to have spread her nets for more than one heiress, on his behalf. Whether, however, his attachment to Maria interfered, or whether there was any truth in a whisper about a private marriage, which some ill-natured person sent about, a year ago, but which met with no kind of credit, certain it is, that his lordship betrayed no personal

inclination to enter into the state of matrimony. His hopes still reverted to ministerial patronage.

Of course you read the *Age*. Well; you remember an article last winter, “On the Ex-Governor.” It really was savage of the *Age* to publish that at the time it did. The government affair had begun to be forgotten, and, I do believe, the Duke of Wellington had something in his eye. But with such an exposure on every table in London unanswered, and, I am afraid, unanswerable, it was out of the question.

However, he did not lose heart, though he cursed the licence of the press, and the cowardice of the cabinet.

When the present men were first talked about, his expectations were very sanguine. Several of them are nearly related to his family. The Marquis of Chester, who has a seat in the cabinet, is his uncle, and returned him last autumn for one of his boroughs, all the duke’s being occupied. But, when the Whigs came into place,

under a pledge of parliamentary reform, he saw there was no time to be lost. The whole foundation of his father's influence might be swept away in an hour, and by any change it was sure to be diminished.

Three days after the ministry was formed, he received intelligence through a private channel of the death of Sir Archibald Scrymgeour Douglas, our ambassador at the court of Persia.

He lost no time in waiting on Lord Chester. I believe the marquis was very well inclined to further his views, but, on consulting with the premier, he was obliged to tell him, in plain terms, that the ministry could not comply with his application.

Lord William called on me that morning. I observed an air of forced gaiety in his address, extremely unlike his usual nonchalance.

“ Well, Arundel,” said he, “ I am going to take your advice at last. I have been in parliament three years, without opening my lips. Come

down to the house to-night, and you shall hear my maiden speech. You stare!—well, well;—I fancy I shall make as profound a statesman as my Lord Chester, and, perhaps, a better orator than his son. You do not know me. *They* did not know me. But, as Sheridan said, I feel it is *here*, and, by God, it shall come out!"

CHAPTER II.

“ Her face, the book of praises, where is read
Nothing but curious pleasures, as from thence
Sorrow were ever rased, and testy wrath
Could never be her mild companion.”

Pericles.

MARIA CIBBER is the daughter of a Scotch clergyman. Her real name is of no consequence to my story. Her mother was a woman of a good family, and proud of her birth. The pittance which the law provides for the widows of the clergy in Scotland was barely sufficient for their subsistence; but the old lady submitted to every privation, and stooped, in secret, to every menial office, in order to maintain an appearance of gentility. If they confined themselves to one

meal in the day, or shivered beside an empty grate, in the coldest mornings of April, she had ample consolation in the thought, that they still preserved their station in society. But this toil and self-denial, however patiently endured, was too much for a frame never naturally strong, and now shaken by anxiety and age. A decrepitude, which affected her mind no less than her body, demanded comforts, which their scanty funds were utterly unable to procure.

Though Maria had received an education which would not have disgraced the highest rank, she had also imbibed those haughty prejudices, of which rank may diminish the absurdity, but cannot palliate the injustice. But when she saw her aged mother exposed to all the miseries of extreme privation, she determined to have recourse to any exertions, even those she had been accustomed to contemplate as most degrading.

Lady Cordelia Hamilton, a distant relation of her mother, was the person on whose judgment

she had the greatest reliance. With a small income, and little personal influence, few people have done more good than Lady Cordelia. If this were the place for such testimony, I could name a hundred families that owe to her kindness all the happiness they enjoy. But no tongue can relate, for no eye has witnessed, how often her modest charities, her gentle consolations, her prudent counsels, have bound up the broken heart, and breathed hope into the fainting spirit.

She had long watched over Maria's fortunes with almost parental anxiety ; and, when she consulted her on her future prospects, she entered into her feelings with the warmest sympathy.

At first, she offered to recommend her, as a governess, to a family which resided in the neighbourhood. But Maria could not leave her mother. Then she endeavoured to procure a purchaser for some drawings, which displayed equal taste and execution. But the market was

overstocked: at last, Maria herself suggested another plan. She had frequently met the manager of the Edinburgh theatre at Lady Cordelia's house; and she recollects that, in praising her voice, he had once observed, that it would have made her fortune on the stage. They resolved to put to the test the sincerity of this compliment.

The negotiation with Mr. Murray was successful. Under a feigned name, but not unrecognized by all, she made her first appearance. Her rare advantages of form and feature, her voice, her taste, her timid but ladylike demeanour, won every heart, and drew down the most rapturous applause. It was discovered by the critics, before her third performance, that her voice was her least attraction. Her talents as a comic actress were of the highest order. The manager offered her a permanent engagement on very favourable terms.

It was now her only anxiety to conceal the

step she had taken from her mother. She knew that she had committed an offence against the old lady's prejudices, for which nothing could atone. Her pride was not the only feeling which the knowledge of her daughter's profession would have outraged. She had been nurtured in those strictly puritan principles which taught the old presbyterians to look with horror on the amusements of the stage. The very name of a theatre was inveterately associated in her mind with all the abominations of the House of Belial.

Fortunately, as Maria calculated, her mother saw hardly any visitors. She was deaf, and blind, and feeble, and the natural peevishness of her temper was aggravated by these infirmities of age. Indeed her whole mind was rapidly hastening into that state of helpless imbecility, from which last and worst of all human calamities the strongest intellect has no exemption.

Maria refused to enter into any engagement, by which she should be bound to perform on

more than two evenings in each week. Lady Cordelia's health furnished a ready excuse for her frequent absence from home. They contrived a thousand stratagems to prevent suspicion; and for a time succeeded.

Maria found almost equal difficulty in applying the money, so hardly won, to supply her mother's wants. She had the management of their little purse, but no ingenuity could have deceived an eye accustomed to all the shifts of housewifery, if the old lady's mind had enjoyed its former vigour. As it was, she was often startled by the appearance of this comfort and that luxury, and poured forth on the trembling girl the most virulent maledictions for her extravagance. Warming as she proceeded, she prophesied that, through the means of such wanton profusion, her own last years would be wasted in a prison or "the Abbey." Then she would threaten to resume the management of their small household, and would call for ac-

counts and receipts in a voice querulous with rage. It generally required some pious fiction to restore her equanimity; and, affecting to wonder at her own forgetfulness, Maria would tell her of presents lately arrived—from her brother in Orkney, or her cousin in Bute, or the never-failing Lady Cordelia.

The Countess of Rothsay, Lord William Plantagenet's eldest sister, spent three months that winter in Edinburgh. A general election was expected; and the countess, who is the greatest female politician in the three kingdoms, determined to secure a certain Scotch county for her husband's nephew. Her husband, who has large estates in Scotland, is entirely at her command, and without presuming to ask her reasons, which, if given, he most probably would not understand, is content to obey and admire in silence. The county on which she had fixed her eye is one in which his influence is considerable. It embraces a large,

wealthy, and populous district. The number of electors is exactly forty-seven, of these there are half-a-dozen officers in the army and navy, ten writers to the signet, eight advocates, and a solicitor before the Supreme Courts, none of whom have a single foot of land, or the remotest personal interest in the county. The rest are country gentlemen, with incomes chiefly varying from eight hundred to three thousand a year. But enough—this is not the place to dive into the mysteries of Scotch law in order to discover the origin of a system so strange, nor to fathom the shallow depths of Scotch logic, in order to detect those fallacies by which it is so imprudently defended. Many of the proprietors who had votes, and all the electors who had no property, were to be found in Edinburgh during “the season.” The countess knew the value of good dinners, splendid “At Homes,” and select literary parties, in the far-famed Athens of the north. The “writers” are a wary race, but even

they must yield to such attractions. Lady Rothsay, however, made her grand attack on Mr. Daniel Downie, of Dunglow, the richest freeholder in the county, who could command the votes of at least a dozen. Dunglow, as he delighted to be called, is the son of a Glasgow butcher, and he is conscious that the splendour of his equipage, and the weight of his purse, do not atone for this blot on his scutcheon with the majority of his countrymen. Birth is still respected in the north. But indeed his manners are as vulgar as his origin. Slowly, and with much toil, and at much expense, he had worked his way into the best circles, but he felt his footing insecure, and feared every moment to be hurled back into his native obscurity. The friendship of *any* countess might be useful,—the intimate friendship of the Countess of Rothsay was invaluable to such a man. She forced him into the Bannantyne, where he had been six times black-balled. She made him sit on her right

hand at those exclusive little parties, to which the proudest of the proud grovelled to be admitted. Dunglow had talked big about “his friends the whigs,” but in two months he yielded at discretion.

The countess had a secondary object in her visit to Edinburgh. Miss Robina Gregg, the great heiress from Dundee, that winter opened her first campaign, conquering and to conquer. A third part of the Athenian youth assumed her chain. But the lady affected rank, and titled lovers are not numerous in the northern metropolis. Rumour said, she already wavered between a bankrupt earl, who was believed to be a blackguard, and a Nova Scotia baronet, who was known to be a fool. This maiden was marked by Lady Rothsay, to retrieve the fortunes of her brother. Lord William was then in Paris, with his cousin the ambassador. A hint brought him to Scotland.

The countess discovered, that Mr. Daniel

Downie, of Dunglow, earnestly desired an introduction to the new actress. You will not do justice to Mr. Daniel's moral character, if you imagine that he had any thing improper in view. Maria, from the moment she went on the stage, had determined to decline all introductions and invitations. When this resolution was known, it was amusing to see how many ladies became ambitious of having her at their parties, and how many young men were almost frantic to obtain her acquaintance. As a matter of fashion, Dunglow was frantic too.

The countess manœuvred: and when was she unsuccessful in her manœuvres? She prevailed on Maria to accept an invitation to her house. She proposed to herself that the party should be one of *business* only. She devoted the evening to her two favourite plans—to flatter Dunglow, and win the heiress. Lord William and Maria were the only other guests. The best-laid plot may fail, the most happily selected party may

never meet. The “Laird” had a previous engagement, from which he could not escape: the heiress preferred dining with the old duchess of Arran, to whose son she was married three weeks after. In this way it was that Lord William first met Maria Cibber. By that name she was introduced to him, and he had no suspicion that it was assumed.

A few days after this party, Maria took lodgings in a small house, about half a mile from town, for the benefit of her mother’s health, which was fast declining.

By one of those accidents, which seem less improbable in real life than in fiction, Lord William lodged in the same house. He had heard the names of the new lodgers, without the least idea that he knew any thing about them, until, one morning, he encountered Maria and her mother in the passage.

“Miss Cibber here!” he began—a quick gesture told him she did not wish to be re-

cognized. Fortunately, the old woman neither heard the exclamation, nor observed the gesture.

An explanation was necessary. An opportunity offered, and it was given.

Such was the beginning of their intimacy.

Months passed. The old lady's end was obviously approaching. It was with difficulty that she could be moved from her chamber to the parlour. If it had not been for Lord William's attentions, Maria must have abandoned her engagement. But her mother had taken a liking to his lordship. When her fretful temper would not permit any one else to approach, she allowed him to read to her, and, in a feeble voice, would tell him long stories of a certain Ann Plantagenet she had known in her youth. The same stories again and again and again—but Lord William heard them every night with unabated patience. Maria was not afraid to leave her under his care.

The secret still was safe; and it seemed as if

the proud widow was destined to go to her grave without being humbled by its knowledge.—Fate had ordered it otherwise.

About five o'clock, one evening in June, after dinner, for she dined at four, Maria, by stealth, was reading over her part for the evening. The old lady had retired to her chamber, as was her custom at that hour. The door was ajar, and by her heavy breathing, her daughter knew she was asleep. Lord William looked in to ask whether he should remain with her mother as usual.

“ My mother is remarkably well.—If I could trust her with the servant, you might go with me, dear William.”

Dear William—ah ! yes,—how much that little word confesses !

A message arrived, at this moment, from an old friend of the family, who had just landed at Leith, from Orkney. She offered to spend the evening with Maria's mother.

“This will do, William,” said she, “I know old Christy Traill, by character, well. She is a very notable nurse:—we could not have a better.”

And so it was arranged.

Who could have thought that this old woman, just arrived from the uttermost extremity of the kingdom, a place where, I am credibly informed, the last news of a public nature was a rumour of a battle at Waterloo, was to discover that secret which it had taken so much trouble to conceal. Yet so it was.

She reached the cottage about half an hour after the young people’s departure.

Christy Traill was a lean, withered hag, with red hair, and ferret eyes—a choice specimen of that disagreeable animal, an old maid.

She sat down beside Maria’s mother, and thus began to comfort her.

“Aweel, aweel, Elsheth, has it come to this? It is a precious text that worthy Mr. Muckle-

wham was wont to handle—‘Blessed is the womb that never bore, and the paps that give no suck.’ Had you no thought of her worthy father, when you made your ain bairn pass through the fire to Moloch?’

“What are you speaking about, Christy?—What can you say against my bairn?”

“Say against her!—the painted Jezebel!”

“Miss Traill,” replied the old lady, raising herself on her elbow, and speaking with a firmer voice, “if you have heard any thing against Maria, speak out. But take this from me before you say it—they were liars that told you the story.”

“Were they so?—May be I didna’ see her wi’ my ain een, this very night, going into the synagogue of Satan.”

And so, with the delight which none but the malicious know, she hastened to relate Maria’s whole iniquity.

As she proceeded, a thousand little circum-

stances recurred to the old lady's mind, which convinced her that the story was true. In an attitude of earnest attention she bent forward in her chair; but she ceased to listen. Blinded by the prejudices of her education, she believed her daughter irretrievably disgraced. Deluded by the maxims of her creed, she judged her guilty of the blackest crime. The labour of a life had been in vain. She saw her child degraded below the meanest, confounded with the worst.—The shock was too great for her wasted strength.—A stifled murmur—a rattle in the throat—and all her sufferings were over.

It was late when Maria returned. Christy, who opened the door herself, greeted her as follows:

“ Yes, yes, mistress—come your ways in and see your handiworks.—Surely the end of these things is death. There's your worthy mother lying a corpse up stairs, and all through your doing.”

Maria sank insensible on the threshold.

“What have you done, you hag of hell,” cried Lord William, in uncontrollable passion.

“Aye, aye, curse awa’—the limmer has her fellows, I warrant; but this is no place for Christy Traill.”

In the course of the ensuing autumn, Maria received a very flattering offer from one of the London theatres. Lord William urged her to accept it. She had no longer any tie to Scotland, and she complied with his advice.

Their connexion was now pretty notorious. Her former prudery was remembered with a sneer. Many indeed asserted there had been a private marriage. No doubt they manage these things snugly in Scotland. You may be married by your friend or your footman, a beggar or a blacksmith. The time and the place are equally indifferent. But, though some people even said that they knew the witnesses who were present

at the marriage, as these witnesses were never named, the story was not generally believed.

Lady Cordelia had a long interview with Maria before her departure. What passed did not transpire. But her ladyship never mentions her name.

CHAPTER III.

“ Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines.”

Hamlet.

THERE is no greater mystery in human nature than the talent of public speaking. In a public assembly the most impetuous are cold, the most confident abashed: that courage quails which has braved death in a thousand forms; and that large and subtle intellect, which has spanned the utmost limits, and fathomed the most secret depths of science, is feeble and obscure.

Though I had often rallied Lord William on his silence in the House, I was far from thinking

that he was likely to succeed as an orator. His information, certainly, if we take into account the dissipated life he has led from his boyhood, is wonderfully extensive and accurate. But I thought his temper too cold, and his taste too refined—or shall I rather call it too effeminate?—to permit him to wield with vigour those rude weapons which are always most efficient in debate. For in such warfare the ponderous axe dashes into splinters the best-tempered rapier. The delicate allusions, the fine distinctions, which are so delightful in the closet, are worse than useless in the senate.

The secret of success in public speaking, as in every other art, lies in the adaptation of the means to the end. There the end is not speculation but action. I might almost say, that whoever fervently desires to persuade his audience, and with perfect singleness of purpose directs his whole energies to that end, will be listened to with patience. I will boldly say, that whoever loiters

in his argument, to dally with choice phrases, or to perfect the proportions of ideal systems—in short, whoever thinks of his opinions rather than his object, or of himself rather than his audience, is certain of failure.

I am very fond of the gallery of the House of Commons. A seat there is almost as much worth having as a seat on the benches below. I do not deny that when some pert ultra has talked for half an hour about the church, the constitution, and himself, I have occasionally regretted that a reply from the gallery would have been a breach of privilege. But what advantages do the *silent* members possess which are not common to them with the other auditors? They can frank,—they can cheer,—and they are not afraid of being turned out on a division. Ah! *then*, I must confess, I envy them. Is it not hard, after having waited for two hours in a crowd of greasy citizens, or paid, which I prefer, your half sovereign to Mr. Wright,—just when you are comfortably

seated in the front row,—Shiel, whom you have never heard, on his legs,—and the prospect of various maiden speeches of promise,—to be turned like a dog to the door, on the motion of Mr. Wynn?

No such calamity occurred on the evening I accompanied Lord William to the House. I parted from him in the lobby. Mr. Wright was punctual. I was admitted without delay by his private door, and displacing my warming-pan in the front row, stepped into the most crowded gallery I had witnessed for some time. I had requested that my seat might be secured on the left of the Speaker, in order that I might have a full view of my friend, whom I expected to find, of course, in his old place, behind the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I glanced up and down the ministerial benches in vain. To one who had been recently familiar with the House, they presented a very singular appearance. Faces, strange to that region, assumed, rather

awkwardly, an air of importance and decorum; while here and there an old tory, solitary and silent, was manifestly annoyed by the novelty of his situation.

I turned to the opposition. What was my surprise to discover Lord William in earnest conversation with the member for Oxford? But my astonishment increased, when I recognized Lord Plantagenet, and the rest of the trusty thirteen, seated, in close phalanx, behind the late Secretary for the Home Department.

One of the under Secretaries of State moved a new writ for the borough of Dodbrook, on the appointment of Lord Chester's eldest son to a place under government. Lord William instantly rose. All eyes were turned on him. The side on which he had taken his position, his personal notoriety, and his relationship to Lord Chester, one of whose boroughs he represented, were, each of them, sufficient to secure the attention of his audience.

It has become the practice in parliament, of late years, to introduce long discussions in a very irregular and preposterous manner. The presentation of a petition, or a motion of this nature, often gives rise to a lengthened debate, which has no object, real or ostensible, but to communicate to the public the sentiments of the speakers. I think the practice alike prejudicial to the style of our debates, and to the progress of our public business. In the mean time it must be confessed it is sometimes convenient.

Lord William commenced with the usual exordium.—He availed himself of this occasion to state to the House and to the country those reasons which had induced him in common with many of his friends to withhold his confidence from his Majesty's government. In taking this decisive step, he was separating himself from some of his nearest relatives, for none of whom he entertained a more sincere regard than for the late member for Dodbrook. He deplored

the alliance which his honourable relative had formed with the whig party, a party which had ever been turbulent and factious in opposition, insolent and incapable in power. His honourable friend might tell him that the ministry had not been tried. Measures, not men, was a rule the justice of which he did not mean to question ; but when a ministry came into place, solemnly pledged to a certain policy, it was open to any man who detested that policy to refuse them his support without further trial.

Lord William had hitherto spoken in a low voice, and not without visible agitation ; but he gathered confidence, as he proceeded, and when he began to denounce the three pledges by which the ministry were understood to be fettered—*Peace—Retrenchment—and Reform*—his voice was raised, every symptom of diffidence disappeared, and his whole person assumed an air of dignity and vigour of which I had not believed it to be capable.

He drew a rapid sketch of our foreign relations, and while he chose to represent Great Britain as already fallen from her proud station as the arbiter of Europe, he protested that the resolution of the present ministry would be received as an avowal of her utter imbecility. He took a comprehensive survey of our financial resources, and declared his conviction that any further reduction of the revenue would bring down inevitable ruin on every interest in the empire.

But he seemed to have reserved the whole force of his vituperation for the subject of reform. The subject is hackneyed enough, and I do not well know how he managed to appear original. It is indeed the greatest triumph of genius, Coleridge would say, it is the only evidence of genius to make that appear new which is most familiar.

Evidence of wonderful talents the speech unquestionably afforded even to those who most

differed from its sentiments. I am a whig of the old school myself. I have always been friendly to reform, and in the present times I think it absolutely necessary to the existence of the state. But it was impossible to refuse my admiration to the rare ability which was displayed on this occasion by his lordship.

I will not attempt to describe the enthusiasm with which it was received by the opposition. At first a modest “hear” from the member for Newark, echoed, in a more audible tone, by the member for Boroughbridge, seemed to express rather the welcome with which the accession of his lordship’s interest was greeted, than a tribute to his personal talents. But, as he proceeded, it became gradually more general, and swelled into a louder and still louder note, till his concluding sentences were drowned in one long peal of exulting applause.

The people in the gallery, if I may judge by

their gestures, and sometimes by a suppressed murmur, are in general not very partial to the opponents of reform: but they paid the most profound attention to Lord William's speech, and the reporters did not rest a moment from their labours.

A young man, who was close beside me, attracted my attention by the unusual interest he displayed. He half rose from his seat, disregarding the repeated warnings of certain official persons, whose attention to the privileges of the House, I must say, in a parenthesis, is most rigidly vigilant. He stretched over the gallery to see the speaker's countenance more distinctly, and seemed to sympathize with all his feelings. When his lordship hesitated, he turned pale; and the blood rushed back to his cheek and temples as he regained his confidence. He evidently laboured under strong emotion as the approbation of the House became more decided;

and when his lordship sat down, it seemed to be with the utmost difficulty he suppressed his inclination to join in the applause.

In the lobby I found Lord William, surrounded by a crowd of *ultras*, who were congratulating him, in the strongest terms, on his success. I thought he was rather impatient of their compliments, though he received them very courteously, and as he seemed in haste, I merely grasped his hand.

It was a clear moonlight night, and I stopped for a short time at the door, with the hope of seeing a friend, whom I had observed in the House. In a few minutes Lord William passed me, followed by the young man who had betrayed so much interest in his speech.

He laid his hand on his lordship's arm. I heard him whisper, in a voice scarcely audible, “William! dear William!”

“Maria!” exclaimed his lordship, turning

round ; “ why, this is madness ; I thought you in jest this morning.”

“ I could not stay at home ; indeed I could not,” returned Maria Cibber, for it was she. I recognized her in a moment. That gentle voice—that delicate hand—and oh ! could one doubt for a moment, who had ever seen Maria’s ankle ?

“ Come, then, you little fool, make haste. The Age will fill two columns with this, next Sunday, if you are seen.”

She leaped lightly into his carriage. The door closed. I looked round. No one had noticed her but myself.

CHAPTER IV.

“ And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought ;
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.”

Hamlet.

THERE is nothing I detest more cordially than a dinner at Lancaster-house. I have a very sincere respect for his grace, because I believe the character that Luttrell is reported to have given of him is as true as it is witty. The duke would do more good than any man in England, if he knew how to set about it. He is always forming plans for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, but he only succeeds in boring them to death.

His grace is an indefatigable chemist, an indefatigable mechanist, an indefatigable agriculturist, an indefatigable antiquarian, an indefatigable statesman, above all, a most indefatigable orator. He corresponds with all the ministers, and most of the crowned heads in Europe, with half the republic of letters, and at least a tenth part of the country gentlemen of Great Britain. He is the patron of two hundred and seventy-five scientific, literary, political, agricultural, religious, and charitable associations ; to each of which, by some strange miracle, he contrives to devote considerable time. He condescends to contribute to various periodical publications, and, in the course of a long life, has printed, for private circulation among a few thousand of his friends, some dozen quartos, and pamphlets in octavo without number.

In spite of all this, or rather, by means of all this, his grace is, beyond comparison, the most insufferable bore in Christendom. There is

much pretension to magnificence in the duke's establishment, for his pride is at least equal to his rank; but, as his income is very small in proportion to either, there is very little solid comfort. Now, really, if one is to listen for hours to a string of solemn or silly common-places, on every uninteresting subject under heaven, it is rather too much that your host's cookery should be as obsolete as his sentiments, and his champaign as vapid as his wit.

Fortunately for his friends, the duke's entertainments are not very numerous. He gave his first dinner this season a few days after Lord William's speech. Lord Plantagenet, who had long been in bad health, was recommended by his physicians to spend the remainder of the winter in the south of France. His grace invited a few friends to dine with his son the day before his departure. Such was the ostensible occasion of the party: but in truth, under this pretence, Lord William had contrived to bring

together some of the leading members of opposition to consult on the tactics of the opening campaign.

His lordship believed that the chief strength of ministry lay in the disunion of their adversaries, and it was his most earnest desire to bring about a strict alliance between the various parties of which the opposition was composed. He had succeeded in gaining the consent of his father to his plans, by dilating on the revolutionary tendency of reform, and the immense personal loss to which it would expose him ; and he thought that, by appealing to similar motives, he might be able to collect into one invincible phalanx the scattered forces of the tories. By his services in this measure, he calculated with confidence on obtaining a high place in the future administration.

With these views he was most anxious to remove those jealousies which prevented a cordial union between the ultra party and principal

members of the late government. The ultras had received the advances of his own immediate friends, and of its other subordinate adherents, without hesitation, and Lord William had found little difficulty in arranging the terms of their alliance. But the leaders on both sides still remembered their recent contests, and could not be persuaded to relinquish their mutual feelings of distrust.

The official experience of most of the late ministry, and the comparative talent and popularity of at least *one* of them, made it evident, however, that their cordial co-operation was absolutely necessary to the defeat of their successors. Accordingly, the principal object of the present meeting was to obtain the consent of the ultra party to open a negotiation with their leaders.

Let us look round the table. I have said enough of Lord William and his father; and I have very little to say of the rest of the family.

Lord John is a fool. He dresses well, and rides admirably. I have a very great regard for Lord Plantagenet, though I never was on very intimate terms with him. He is a slow man, rather a proser, like his father, but tolerably modest, and, I am convinced, thoroughly conscientious: I do not remember to have heard him express strong feelings on any subject, except on the catholic question. He lives to this day under the most serious personal apprehension of being burned at Smithfield, whenever catholicism shall have had sufficient time to feel its strength in the legislature.

On the right of the duke sits his grace of Cornwall, with one exception the greatest borough patron in the kingdom. His enemies say that nature did not intend him for a statesman. His best friends do not pretend that he has any talents as an orator. As to the rest, he is rather self-sufficient, very weak, and very honest.

That venerable nobleman opposite, whose

many years have neither subdued the vigour of his mind, nor disturbed the tranquillity of his temper, is the greatest lawyer of the age. To knowledge not less accurate than profound, and intellect not less patient than acute, he joins in rare union the most delightful courtesy and the most imperturbable good-nature. To say that his character has defects, is to say that he is human; but when the animosities of the day shall have been consigned to history, assuredly England will record his name among the wisest and the best, with affectionate reverence. And truly even now, while our animosities are at their height, it requires no great exertion of tolerance to excuse the old, though they cling somewhat tenaciously to the prejudices of their youth, and to respect that invincible consistency which at least demonstrates the sincerity of those opinions in which we are not able to participate.

That grave and rather solemn personage, in serious consultation with Lord William, is the

philosopher of the party, whom the patronage of the Duke of Cornwall has lately metamorphosed from a vender of linens into a vender of paradoxes. Since that strange transmutation, all his writings and speeches have been trumpeted by the tory press with ridiculous perseverance. He is a man of moderate ability, considerable acquirements, and inordinate vanity.

I know nothing for which the noble viscount on his right is remarkable, but the unblushing effrontery with which he exercises an illegal influence in controlling the votes of his tenantry. He has lately increased his parliamentary interest by means of which most other noblemen would be heartily ashamed.

I must not forget the most conspicuous person in the room. That odd-looking elderly gentleman with a slovenly dress and an ungainly though athletic figure, is one of the most honest, consistent, and independent members of the old tory party. In spite of those extravagant ges-

tures and that strange quaintness of expression, you cannot listen to him for five minutes without perceiving that he is a man of great and original genius. It may be permitted a liberal to regret, that the ultras have found him on all occasions the violent and no doubt the sincere advocate of their most extreme opinions.

That young man, with an abundance of ringlets shading his handsome though rather effeminate features, is the Marquis of Launceston, among the richest subjects, and the representative of one of the oldest families in Europe. His accomplishments are almost universal, and, although scarcely of age, he has already exhibited political talents of the very highest order. It is melancholy to observe that he is willing to sacrifice all these advantages to a frivolous and contemptible ambition. He devotes two-thirds of his time to the study of cookery, would give half his fortune to discover a new method of tying his neckcloth, and resigns without a sigh that place in the

public councils, to which his birth, his fortune, his acquirements, and his genius alike entitle him, to secure the reputation of a leader of the *ton*.

I will not detain you with a description of the rest; suffice it to say, that they were the flower of the ultras, the strength of that haughty and somewhat obstinate party, which hitherto had kept itself aloof from the contamination of conciliatory measures, and clung most closely to those opinions which it knew to be most unpopular.

While the servants were in the room, no allusion was made to the real object of the meeting. The political topics of the day were scarcely mentioned. The conversation was by no means interesting. Unfortunately for the company, his grace of Lancaster had recently turned his whole attention to the cultivation of potatoes. He had discovered, he assured them, sundry new virtues in the potatoe which had escaped the observation of all preceding philosophers. The root might

be dressed in no less than seven hundred and seventy-three different ways, and, moreover, might be used with advantage in the composition of bread, puddings, omelets, and indeed most known dishes. The flower yielded the richest dyes. The apples were medicinal. In short, each part of the plant had its appropriate praises, which, delivered in a slow measured tone, and without a single pause, edified the company during the greater part of dinner. It had been well if his grace's predilections had been confined to theory. By way of a running commentary on his harangue, every second dish was impregnated with this divine root. It was amusing to witness Lord Launceston's despair.

To the dissertation on potatoes succeeded a long account of a new species of goose, the first specimen of which his grace had had the honour of importing. Then he favoured all who would listen by a very minute description of an intricate piece of mechanism, for toasting bread, of

his own invention. In short, their worthy host was as great a bore as usual.

At last the servants withdrew. Then was a pause. They prepared to commence the real business of the evening.

CHAPTER V.

“ Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night !
That runaways’ eyes may wink ; and Romeo
Leap to these arms, untalk’d of, and unseen.”

Romeo and Juliet.

IT is night. In a small drawing-room, elegantly, but not splendidly furnished, Maria Cibber is waiting for Lord William. Her cheek is pale, her eye dull and heavy. Who could recognise in this drooping though still beautiful girl, that Beatrice whose whole heart but four hours ago seemed overflowing in irrepressible merriment ?

Alas ! the lot of those who minister to the pleasures of the public is a cruel one at best.

A youth of alternate excitement and depression, a despised, neglected, miserable old age. But how shall I tell in what degree the cruelty of *her* lot is aggravated, who yielding to the strong temptations with which she is surrounded, and, forgetting that the tempter is her superior in rank, permits herself to *love*?

Oh ! that my single voice could call down the execration of the public on the heartless profigate, who sacrifices to his selfish lust the happiness of a confiding woman. Oh ! that my single voice could persuade my countrymen, that the morality which prescribes to our sex a less rigid rule of chastity than to the other, which condemns unheard the frailty of woman, and passes over unnoticed the voluntary crime of man, is altogether hollow and deceitful.

“ It is he !—ah ! no, the carriage passes—he said he might be detained—Ann, my watch—I am certain he will come.”

“ Had you not better go to bed, ma’am ?”

said Ann, who was more tired than her mistress, with much less reason.—“ My lord will not come at this hour.”

“ You need not wait—I shall not require any thing.”

“ But you are unwell, ma’am.”

“ Oh no—a slight head-ache—I shall be quite well to-morrow—you need not wait.”

“ Indeed, ma’am, you had better go to bed—you are very much fatigued—his lordship should be ashamed of himself for using you in this way.”

“ Be silent, Ann—be silent, and leave me—I have not spirits to reprove you as I ought.”

Left to herself, she stole into the next room to gaze upon her child. Sole comfort of many miserable hours. She drew back the curtain. She bent over her infant. A tear fell upon its brow, as she murmured, in a voice half choked

with emotion, “ If he saw you now, he could not but love you.”

She placed the candle so as to shade the light from the sleeping child, and sat down by its side.

Another hour.—The poor girl had been ill. Her professional exertions had been unusually laborious. Nature could endure no longer.—Maria slept.

At eight in the morning, Lord William opened the door of the chamber. When the party at which we left him had dispersed, he had accompanied the young Earl of Burlington to one of those temples of chance, where the wealthy sometimes seek excitement, but the desperate much more frequently oblivion. Lord William was no gambler, till he was a ruined man.

“ What, Maria!—up so early.—She is asleep. The fool has not been in bed. Can she have been waiting for me?—What a wretch I am to treat

her in this manner!—Maria! love!—How cold she is.—Look up, love—it is I.”

She opened her eyes. She gazed on him for a few seconds, then sprang into his arms.

For *him* she had neither reproaches nor complaints. She would not even sadden the few moments of their meeting by permitting him to know the physical pain under which she was suffering. For *him*, whenever he might come, she had a smiling cheek, and a fervent welcome.

Oh! who can fathom the mystery of woman’s love? It is proof against the most contemptuous neglect. It survives the most brutal cruelty. We are not worthy of her. Compared with her, the very best of us are cold and selfish. What a ruffian then must that man be, who can pollute the pure current of her thoughts, or crush her kind and gentle spirit without remorse.

Lord William remained only a few minutes with Maria. He had come to tell her that he was about to leave town for some weeks.

The proceedings at Lancaster House are a state secret, which you must pardon me for preserving for the present. The success of his lordship's plans you may gather from the sequel. One resolution however was made public immediately. On separating himself from the ministry, Lord William had retired from the representation of his uncle's borough. His brother accepted the Chiltern hundreds, on his departure from England. It was the wish of his father, and the party, that he should stand for the county, which Lord Plantagenet had hitherto represented. No opposition was expected, but the necessary expenses were to be partly defrayed, from a fund, concerning which you will hear a good deal more, before my narrative is concluded.

“ And so, love,” said his lordship, “ for the present we must part. I have not used you well of late, but these polities distract me.—By the way, Maria, what money have you in the house?”

“ About forty pounds. But, if you want more, I can send to my banker’s in an hour.”

“ The forty pounds will do at present. However, if you can send me a couple of hundreds before one o’clock, you will oblige me. I am reduced to my last shilling.”

CHAPTER VI.

“ Oh fortune, fortune ! all men call thee fickle :
If thou art fickle, what dost thou with him
That is renown’d for faith ?”

Romeo and Juliet.

“ Who is that beautiful girl to whom Lord William is speaking so earnestly ?” said the Earl of Burlington to Harry Mowbray. “ She looks like somebody one ought to know, but I do not recollect her face.”

“ Her name is Flora Macdonald. She is the only daughter of that sneaking old man beside her, and the greatest heiress in our county. I do not know a more delightful person, though her mother is decidedly unpresentable, and her father is a Scotchman, an attorney, and a whig.”

“ I suspect, Harry, Lord William is in the toils. That smile was well aimed, and seems to have done execution.”

“ Why, if what I hear be true, the lady’s five thousand a year would be particularly useful to his lordship, at the present moment.”

“ You do not mean that his affairs are in disorder again.”

“ Worse than ever. I am told his debts are enormous. But he will be quite a new man, if he can persuade old Macdonald to give his consent. He seems on pretty good terms with the daughter already, but she is a sad coquette ; she used poor Mortimer very ill.”

“ Good terms indeed, Harry. Confound the dog, how happy he looks ! What is she about now?—showing him a ribbon?—They are talking of his election, I suppose. He is pretty sure to be returned, if he can get *her* to canvass for him.”

“ He would be more sure if he could secure her father’s influence. But that is out of the question.”

“ Why there is no contest, is there?”

“ Every probability of a very keen contest. I heard, this morning, that Sir Edmond Mortimer has been requested to stand on the whig interest.”

“ Well, but Harry, you told me, only two days ago, that you were sure your friend Mortimer would never return to England.”

“ Certainly not without a very strong motive. But he is an enthusiastic reformer, and the party make a point of it. Besides, he is vain of his family influence. With all his talent, I do not know any man more easily flattered.”

“ Is he likely to succeed?”

“ I should think certain. The majority of the leading men in the county belong to the whig party, and old Macdonald, who has great in-

fluence with the manufacturers, is Sir Edmond's factotum, and was his guardian.”

“ His guardian?”

“ Yes.—Sir Richard, the last baronet, had the greatest confidence in him. Indeed, Macdonald owes half his fortune to the patronage of the family. When Sir Richard first took notice of him, he was an attorney's clerk in the county town, with a miserable salary.”

“ Well, I am sorry to learn that there is any doubt of Lord William's election. I heard nothing of this, the other night, at the duke's.”

“ I believe the resolution of the whigs was rather sudden. It was not known in town till this morning.”

“ Has Macdonald taken any part in the business?”

“ I suppose he did not know of it till to-day. But they reckon on him, of course.”

“ Why, I'd hardly answer for him, Harry, if this wooing should go any farther. By the way,

Miss Macdonald has a very good chance of being Duchess of Lancaster one day. Poor Plantagenet is seriously unwell. I never knew any one so much altered in so short a time. But, come, let us join Lord William ; I see they have concluded their *tête-à-tête*."

CHAPTER VII.

“ —For in companions
That do converse and waste the time together,
Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,
There must be needs a like proportion
Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit.”

Merchant of Venice.

THE whig and tory parties had divided the representation of the county of S—— without contest, for more than a century. The expense of an election excluded the competition of the large mass of the freeholders, and though two-thirds of the great families were attached to the whig interest, one tory had been uniformly returned, to each parliament, to preserve *the peace of the county.*

Perhaps you may not be fully aware, how much virtue there is in that little phrase.

Half-a-dozen families, in one corner of the shire, nominated the candidates. The rest received their mandate with silent subservience. The men might be notorious profligates. But then opposition would have endangered *the peace of the county*.

They might be indolent, or ignorant, or incapable. But what was all the evil their deficiencies could produce, when weighed against *the peace of the county*?

And had they been the most industrious, the best informed, and the most efficient members in the House, their exertions must have been sure to neutralize each other, for they were pledged to vote, on all occasions, on opposite sides. But who would have sacrificed, to such considerations, *the sacred peace of the county*?

In this manner, the first whisper of two whig candidates was generally drowned in an universal

outcry—*the peace of the county!*—*the peace of the county!* But, if it was not instantly silenced, the tory aristocracy began to form clubs, levy subscriptions, and put forth manifestoes, which threatened an obstinate and expensive opposition. The whigs, repenting of their rashness, and preferring the certainty of one member, without expense, to the probability of two, with a heavy contribution, hastily withdrew the second candidate, and joined in the cry of *the peace of the county!* But the peculiar crisis in which the country was placed, at the moment when Lord Plantagenet retired, induced those who were friendly to the ministry to contest the approaching election at all hazards. It is said that the Duke of Kensington, the Earl of Greenwich, Sir Daere Paul Dacre, and other influential members of the whig party in the county, received letters from head-quarters, urging the importance of even a single vote. However that may be, it is certain that two days after Lord William had

signified his intention of coming forward, a very numerous meeting was held at Vesey Castle to consult on the best means of opposing his return.

Sir Eustace de Vesey, who had been returned with Earl Plantagenet, at the last election, is the representative of a family, from which the whig member had been chosen time out of mind. The hereditary veneration in which the name is held, at first suggested the nomination of his cousin, Sir Hameline de Vesey, as Lord William's opponent. But Sir Hameline, having some expectation of a peerage, respectfully declined the honour. It was necessary to choose a candidate from another family. The Dacres, and the Mowbrays, and the Warrens, and the Daltons, a son of Lord Greenwich, and a nephew of the Duke of Kensington, were named in succession. It was amusing to see, with what variety of excuses, and with what mock humility, each refused a compliment, which was sure to bring along with it both trouble and expense.

At last the name of Sir Edmond Mortimer was mentioned. Two years before, when Sir Eustace had talked of retiring, he had shown some desire to offer himself as his successor. He is of a very ancient family, has a large unencumbered estate, and is adored by his tenantry. I may add, that he has the reputation of great talent, and has always been enthusiastically attached to the cause of reform.

With all this, Sir Edmond was by no means very popular with the party. To his equals his manners are cold and repulsive in the extreme. For many years of his life all his habits were those of a recluse, and not a few of his peculiar opinions still retain that character.

He was deformed from his childhood, and a consciousness of his personal defects gave a morbid tone to his character at an early age. As he grew older, his disinclination to mingle with the world gradually increased. He devoted his whole time to the more abstruse sciences. While still

a youth, he was sent, for some years, at his own request, to a German university. In a place where a passion for study was carried to the most absurd excess, the young Englishman was distinguished by the severity of his application. In a place where every other passion was equally unbridled, he was distinguished by the purity, or rather the austerity of his morals. When he returned to England he continued the same habits.

Flora Macdonald, the daughter of his guardian, was destined to bring about an entire revolution in his character. He persuaded himself that he had found in her a woman who could forget the defects of his outward appearance in her regard for the qualities of his mind.

I do not think that Harry Mowbray had sufficient grounds to accuse Flora of coquetry. She had a real friendship for Sir Edmond, and her respect for his talents was certainly unfeigned. Her manners are delightful to all. Imprudent

she may have been; heartless or intentionally cruel, I am sure she was not.

But still, the moment when he awoke from his delusion was one of intense and unspeakable anguish. The words in which she declined the honour of his hand with a coldness, the intention of which was kind, seemed to upbraid him with having ventured to hope that any woman could ever love a being so deformed. He interpreted all her former attentions as a series of charitable hypocrisies, beneath which she had forcibly concealed that loathing which no concealment could suppress.

After weeks of mental and physical suffering, which it was painful for those around him to contemplate, Sir Edmond returned into the world with habits strangely altered by his disappointment. He could no longer endure that solitude in which he had formerly delighted. He sought for some active pursuit in which he might forget those humiliating feelings which his repulse had

awakened. For a short time he found it in politics, to which he brought a mind stored with historical knowledge, and accustomed to the most profound speculations. If he had succeeded in getting into Parliament, he would probably have remained in England. But when Sir Eustace de Vesey gave up his intention of retiring from public life, he despaired of finding any immediate opening. The petty quarrels of the county soon failed to furnish him with sufficient excitement. He found himself idle, and determined to travel.

Though Sir Edmond Mortimer was by no means popular with many who were present, his name was no sooner mentioned than the meeting determined to select him as Lord William's opponent.

For this there were many reasons. His talents are universally respected, and his influence is by no means small. I have said he has a large fortune, is connected with the best families, and

is a kind and indulgent landlord. He has also other sources of influence.

The prejudice in favour of birth, the expense attending elections, and the inveterate force of habit, had long confined the nomination of the county members in the hands of a few great families.

But the old feelings were dying away, and interests hitherto overlooked had begun to make themselves regarded. The number of freeholders, less than three thousand at the last contest, had been more than doubled by the rise of numerous villages, called into existence by the progress of manufactures. The inhabitants of these villages were generally radical reformers, and from their multitude and union of late years, had caused serious apprehensions among the old oligarchy.

Their union, indeed, was more apparent than real. For, although they had corresponding clubs, general meetings, and all the other instruments of an organized system of association, they were distinguished from one another by many

different shades of political sentiment. But without descending to more minute distinctions of opinion, they might easily be divided into two great classes. By far the more moderate, the larger, and the more respectable portion, were dissenters. They were generally favourable to the introduction of vote by ballot, and perhaps looked with some jealousy on the enormous revenues of the church ; but, in other respects, their ideas of reform did not materially differ from those of the most liberal among the whigs. Universal suffrage, annual parliaments, abolition of tithes, and some still more extravagant doctrines, formed the creed of the minority.

One man exercised almost unbounded influence over the former class.

Mowbray's account of Duncan Macdonald was essentially correct. He was born of obscure parentage in Scotland, but left his native country at an early age. The late Sir Richard Mortimer took a fancy for him while he was still only the

clerk of a petty attorney, prevailed on his master to receive him into partnership, and in course of time confided to him the whole management of his extensive property. At his death he left him a considerable legacy, and appointed him the sole guardian of his infant son. Partly by this patronage, partly by the political connexion which it enabled him to form with the other whig gentry of the county, partly by the zeal which he uniformly professed for the peculiar tenets of the dissenters, and partly by a singular shrewdness of character, and an unwearyed attention to business, Duncan Macdonald, in the course of a long life, had amassed a large fortune, and acquired very great political influence.

The dissenters looked up to him with pride and gratitude. He was by far the richest man of their persuasion in the county, and he was on terms of familiar intimacy with the men of the highest name and station in their neighbourhood. But, with all this, he seemed to place his chief

pleasure in the enjoyment of their society, in arranging their little quarrels, and in furthering their interests. I know not whether his profession of principles, in some degree less radical than those which were most generally among them, did not increase rather than diminish his authority.

Among the whigs he had hitherto acted as the organ and representative of the Mortimer family. He recommended himself, besides, to many by his unobtrusive, pliant, and somewhat sycophantic manners, no less than by his singular talent for political intrigue.

Of late years he had obtained additional importance with all parties, by the growing power of the radicals. The poorer freeholders considered him their patron, and the great families trusted to him to prevent any rude interference with their established influence.

The meeting imagined that, by selecting Sir Edmond Mortimer as their candidate, they se-

cured Duncan Macdonald's cordial co-operation, and, consequently, might calculate with certainty on the unanimous support of the Dissenters.

Resolutions were accordingly drawn up in due form, and preparations were made to transmit them to Sir Edmond without delay.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ —— I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other—— How now—what news?”

Macbeth.

THE whole county of S—— was in raptures. For the first time, within the memory of man, it was to enjoy the blessings of a contested election. Old and young could dream of nothing but flags and ribbons; music and processions; riots and harangues. The tradesmen were in paradise. The innkeeper saw rivers of ale and wine, the glazier heard the crash of a thousand windows in the approaching contest. The lesser free-holders were swollen with pride. To be can-

vassed by the proudest and the fairest, flattered, and treated, and caressed ; to get drunk for nothing, and to feed for nothing on the fat of the land ; a bribe here and there ; a son made a tide-waiter, and a nephew an exciseman—such were their dreams. Happy England ! when such dreams are so often realized.

The flag waved on the battlements of Arleston to welcome the arrival of the candidate.

The ancient palace of the Plantagenets is situated in the centre of a park, the largest in England, which embraces within its bounds every variety of scenery, lawn, brake, and forest—the wide plain, the dark and winding glen—the gurgling brook, the rapid torrent, the broad and placid lake. High above all, unshaken by the tempests of four hundred winters, rise the grey towers of Arleston, with narrow windows and grated loop-holes, and sculptured with various devices ; among which, the lions of England, the rose of Lancaster, and the plant from which the

name of Plantagenet is derived, are most conspicuous. And, on this day, it seemed as if old times were returning. The glories of Arleston had seen a long eclipse. No warder had paced the battlement. No trumpet had sounded from the watch-tower. The broad gates, seldom opened, were rusting on their hinges. The drawbridge, seldom raised, creaked beneath the foot. But now the walls were crowded with attendants. The trumpet rang joyfully. The banner of the Plantagenets floated proudly on the breeze. No wicket served for entrance. The gates were thrown open, from which “an army in battle array had marched out.” Within, the hall was filled with the smoke of the banquet, and the long galleries echoed with unwonted merriment.

Besides visitors from the neighbourhood, who already began to pour in on every side, the castle was crowded with a large number of guests who had accompanied the duke from town.

Then was the Countess of Rothsay, the duke's eldest daughter, a most invaluable canvasser. To me there is no being more disgusting than a female politician. Formed equally to dazzle and to captivate, the countess stoops to prostitute her attractions to all the basest purposes of political intrigue. From the management of a rotten borough to the discovery of a cabinet secret; from flattering a London butcher to poisoning the ear of royalty itself, she is learned in all the arts by which corruption is supported. She had been initiated into the secrets of the Ultra Cabal, and had entered into their plans with her usual earnestness, and perhaps with somewhat more than her usual imprudence.

There was the young Countess of Burlington, a mere girl both in mind and years. She saw in the preparations for the election little more than a gay and bustling spectacle, which agreeably interrupted the dulness of the season.

There were the three ladies Monfitchett—

Constance, Mabel, and Agatha, sisters of the Marquess of Launceston. It was a great mistake in the Countess of Rothsay to bring them into the tumult of an election. They were disgusted with every thing and every body, and, in return, contrived to make themselves universally unpopular.

There was old Lady Sarah Dunstanville, the Duke of Cornwall's sister, who was expected to have great influence with the clergy; and old Lady Martha Montford, Sir Simon Montford's widow, who promised to do miracles with the Dissenters.

There was the Right Honourable Ann Audley Arundel, in her own right, Countess of Flint, Peverell, and Cyvelioc, who was to carry the county by the force of blood; and Miss Margaret Mary Turnbull, the great heiress of Bristol, who was to put down all opposition by her golden smiles.

Then, of the male sex, there was the Earl of

Rothsay, a weak well-meaning man, exceedingly proud of his wife's abilities, and, at least, equally afraid of incurring her displeasure.

There was Lord William's intimate friend the Earl of Burlington, who, by a strange freak of nature, has a mind so constituted, that he is dull or witty, indolent or industrious, profligate or devout, exactly according to the character of his temporary associates.

There was the Marquess of Launceston, of whom I have already spoken; and Lord Raymond Monfitchett, who has all his brother's affectation, without the faintest shadow of his talent.

The Duke of Cornwall's learned linen-draper had come down to assist with his advice, and perhaps with his eloquence.

The aristocratic Horace Hopkins, to secure his friend's election and strengthen the new alliance, had promised his countenance, at the

certain hazard of encountering the contaminating approaches of the middle classes.

To name all were tedious. But, at least, I must not omit the witty Harry Mowbray. Not in such company met for such purpose, three short years ago, could his former friends have expected he should be found. A whig by birth, a whig by education, a whig by prejudice, a whig on principle, who could have thought that, in three short years, he was to be branded with the name of renegade? The last time I attended the union, Harry Mowbray delivered one of the most eloquent speeches which I had ever heard within its walls. I am by no means a violent partisan, and though a whig, I thought his vituperation of the tories illiberal and extravagant. Young Capel Clinton, who sat by my side, thought so too. He answered him at some length, and concluded by observing that extreme opinions in politics were not always the most per-

manent. Mowbray rose to reply, visibly under the influence of uncontrollable passion. I almost blush to remember the vehement adjurations, with which he called on all present to witness, in a recapitulation of his political creed, the solemn and irrevocable act by which he devoted himself to that cause which Clinton had opposed. The next time I saw him was in the House of Commons. He spoke in a clear unfaltering voice from the back benches on the ministerial side. He touched on the very topics on which I had heard him harangue in the union. He bestowed the most fulsome praises on the very measures which had been the objects of his unmeasured vituperation. He poured forth a torrent of eloquent abuse against the very men whom he had lauded to the skies.

Ambition was the talisman which had wrought this miracle. To gain a seat for one of the Duke of Cornwall's boroughs, and the distant prospect of ministerial patronage, he sacrificed friends,

character, and principle. But he has proved himself no less imprudent than unprincipled. He mistook the signs of the times, and deserted his old connexions for a losing cause. The consciousness of this sits heavy at his heart. It gives double bitterness to the virulence of that satire, with which he pursues his former associates.

Poor Harry ! I pity him from my soul.—In public, he is the slave of his adopted party. He attacks, with unsparing violence, whatever measure it suits them to decry, and prostitutes his brilliant powers of eloquence and wit to defend their most corrupt and shameful practices. In private, his conversation betrays that political scepticism, by which, to his own mind, the renegade endeavours to excuse his breach of political rectitude.

Mowbray had brought with him a German Count, whom he had picked up in town. A citizen of the world, who had come to England, for the express purpose of studying the British

constitution. He had fallen in love with those Utopian pictures, which foreign jurists and philosophers, in total ignorance of the subject, have presented to their countrymen, as a true delineation of British liberty. He longed to understand that miraculous balance, the result of which is not perfect inactivity, but perpetual action—that strange opposition of interests, which is not productive of eternal discord, but of eternal peace—that faultless system, which blends, in unbroken harmony, the warring elements of liberty and law.

Mowbray had recommended an election, as the best possible opportunity of satisfying his curiosity. At no small hazard, he had brought him to Arleston in the character of his butt, for the Count was fresh from Jena, and had fought fifteen duels in the last three years, as his face, scored like an apple-pie, amply attested.

He delighted to startle the philosopher by dragging into his notice every anomaly in the

theory or practice of the constitution, which could shock his preconceived ideas. He took pleasure in leading him to believe, that the whole fabric of our laws is one vast mass of contradiction and absurdity; as if, by the destruction of his Utopian dreams, he expected to convert him to political scepticism.

He conducted his attacks on the Count's favourite doctrines, however, with the most imperturbable gravity, and generally obtained the serious assent of his Grace of Lancaster, or the Reverend Dr. Malpas, the duke's chaplain, to all those extravagant assertions of privilege or prerogative with which he overwhelmed the wondering German.

I think I have named the most remarkable guests. The rest, if there be any others worthy of your notice, must speak for themselves in the sequel.

CHAPTER IX.

“ — If that you conquer,
I live to joy in your great triumph ; should
Your lot be different, I’ll not weep, but share it.
You did not doubt me a few hours ago.”

Byron’s Sardanapalus.

Two days after the festivities had commenced at Arleston, Duncan Macdonald and his daughter arrived at Gideon Cottage, a small brick house, close to the high road, about half a mile from the county town. In this humble residence, he had accumulated his wealth, and he showed no inclination to change it.

Mrs. Macdonald bustled down stairs to meet them. In a few minutes they were seated at dinner, and all the news of the neighbourhood

was produced for their amusement. Then might you hear, how the Reverend Malachi Melville had taken Miriam Thomson to wife; how Rebecca Bateson had gone astray, and Lady Deborah Dacre had been converted; how coals were miraculously cheap, and candles surprisingly dear; how Mrs. Sackville Latimer had behaved with infinite rudeness, and Lady Martha Montford had been particularly civil. At length dinner was removed, and the tide of Mrs. Macdonald's eloquence began to flow with somewhat less impetuosity.

“ Flora, my dear,” said her father, “ your mother and I have some business to talk about, with which we need not trouble you.”

When they were left alone, Macdonald drew his chair nearer his wife, and continued, “ Well, my love, I have seen Sir Henry, and he assures me, there is not the most distant probability of Lord Plantagenet's recovery. His lungs are incurably affected.”

“ And who is right now, Mr. Macdonald ? ” returned his wife, triumphantly : “ did not I tell you, from the beginning, that Lord William’s attentions should not be slighted ? The very first time I heard his brother’s cough, I was convinced he would one day be Duke of Lancaster. Who is right now ? ”

“ You were right, my love, as you always are,” said the attorney, soothingly. “ I never repent having followed your advice, and I never needed it more than I do at this moment. Those confounded numskulls at Vesey Castle, without speaking to me on the subject, have pressed Sir Edmond Mortimer to allow himself to be proposed for the county, and they all reckon on my support. Now, how I can take an active part against the Plantagenets, as matters now stand between us, I do not see ; and yet, if Sir Edmond should accept their offer, as he says, in this letter, he will, I can hardly refuse to assist him in his canvass.”

“ You must gain time, Mr. Macdonald,—only gain time. I am sure Lord William is coming to the point, and if he should make a declaration one of these days,—to-morrow, or Wednesday, for instance,—as I confidently expect, nobody can ask you to oppose your son-in-law that is to be.”

“ But *is* he coming to the point, Esther?—We have given him opportunities enough of late. I much fear——”

“ Pooh! pooh! you men do not understand these things.”

“ Well, I hope it may be so: meanwhile, as you say, my dear, we must gain time. I shall find it no easy matter; for here is a letter, from Sir Edmond, requesting me to meet him at Wigmore to-morrow.”

The day after this conversation, a travelling carriage stopped at Wigmore gate, which was recognised as Sir Edmond’s. The baronet’s arrival was unexpected. He had travelled with the

utmost rapidity, and had written to no one but Macdonald. The white-headed porter dragged open the broken gate with difficulty. The avenue was choked with withered leaves and weeds. Sir Edward leaned back, with his travelling cap drawn over his face, and the panting horses moved slowly up the winding ascent leading to the hall.

They had not proceeded many yards when the bell at the porter's-lodge rang again, and two horsemen galloped after the carriage.

“ Welcome to England, my dear Sir Edward.”

“ What, Macdonald!—so punctual; this is really kind.”

The attorney knew the secret of securing a character when one is likely to need it.

“ Mrs. Macdonald is in good health, I trust: and—and—and your daughter—”

“ Both well, my dear sir, and hope to see

you at Gideon Cottage before many days have passed."

They entered the house, and in half an hour the baronet was ready to commence business.

"There is a copy of my acceptance of the committee's offer," he began; "I transmitted it to Sir Eustace this morning."

"Then you *have* accepted their offer?"

"Did you doubt that I should do so?"

"Nothing could be more flattering, certainly; but have you calculated the expense? It will be enormous."

"My fortune can afford it, and I am confident I shall succeed. It is only one struggle; if the tories are defeated this time, they will never try the contest again."

"You should recollect we have been obliged to allow a large deduction from the rent this year, Sir Edmond; and you will lose at least five thousand by that failure of Bateson's."

“ Why, Macdonald, what a croaker you have grown. I have no debt. My rental, with all the deductions, is more than fifteen thousand a year; I have never spent ten; and besides other property, have at this moment, as you know yourself, not much less than two hundred thousand pounds in the funds.”

“ Well, if you choose to pay the money, I have no more to say; but I am much mistaken if you escape under thirty thousand, at the very least.”

“ Say sixty, if you will. Every vote is of consequence at a moment like the present; and even if it were not so, the county should be delivered from its preposterous subjection to the Plantagenets, at all hazards. I am convinced that if all the freeholders were polled, not one-fifth part would be found friendly to their influence.”

“ As you please, Sir Edmond, as you please:

only remember I have done my duty in warning you of the expense."

" Yes, yes ; you have given me your advice, with all due professional caution. Now, then, Macdonald, let us sit down and determine our measures. In the first place, here is a list of the committee. I will ride over to Vesey Castle before breakfast to-morrow, and contrive a meeting there as soon as possible. In the mean time, let us look at the names, and calculate the influence they are likely to exercise. There are some others we must manage to have added. The first here is old Sir Eustace ; of course, he carries with him all the Vesey family. Then Sir Dacre Paul Dacre ; the Dacres and the Warrens go with him. Mr. Sackville Latimer—conceited block-head ! he will do more harm than good—the most unpopular man in the county !"

And so they proceeded, discussing the merits of each. When they had concluded this re-

view, Macdonald showed an intention of taking leave.

“ Dalton—Tracy—Tressilian,” repeated he, rising, “ good names all. I think we need go no farther. You are certain of the whigs. Here is Sir Fulk Montacute, too, a decoy-duck for the moderate tories: but I am afraid you will have little success with them. Well, Sir Edmond, I see how you are situated, and I am glad to find you are so strongly supported. You must be fatigued. I will not intrude any longer on your time at present; but if, in the course of the election, or, in the event of a petition against the return, if you should want any professional advice—”

“ No, no; Macdonald, you shall not get off with an offer of professional advice. Sit down, if you please, I have another subject to talk to you about. In my opinion, the great object is to secure the dissenters. My friends do not seem to be aware of their weight in the county. Now

it is *there*, Macdonald, that I trust to you. You can do every thing in that quarter."

"Indeed, Sir Edmond, you are mistaken. I never had much influence among them, and at this moment, I have less than ever."

"Hush, hush—no^t mock modesty with me. Do I not know? Have I not seen?"

"Well, if I must speak out, to confess the truth, my dear sir, the present feelings of that party are not very favourable to your success."

"Why, you do not mean that they are likely to prefer Lord William Plantagenet, on the ground of his political principles?"

"Not exactly, Sir Edmond; but they have a jealousy of the whigs."

"I know one whig, of whom they have very little jealousy; at least you used to call yourself a whig."

"A stanch whig, as you know, sir. But my influence with them, seriously, is not what it once was. Radical principles are gaining ground

every day. The London corresponding republican society has a branch club that meets not ten yards from my own door."

"Well, well—I see you wish to raise the value of your favours by exaggerating their difficulty. Take what credit you please for your assistance, but about it speedily."

"As speedily as I can, of course, Sir Edmond. But you must excuse me for a few days. There is good time yet; and, to tell you the truth, I have, at this moment, the most urgent business, of a private nature, which demands my instant attention. It was with the utmost difficulty that I succeeded in setting aside an hour or two this forenoon to your affairs; but I was determined to make any sacrifice to meet your wishes, since you expressed them so earnestly."

"I assure you, my dear Macdonald, I am very grateful for your attention. Your business has come in the way at an unfortunate moment, and that is all that can be said about the matter.

Of course, you will consult your own convenience, in the first place. But I rely on your assistance, at the very earliest moment you can spare."

"So I have settled that affair for the present," muttered the attorney, as he went down stairs. "Elijah," continued he, addressing his servant, "take this across the park to Foster; he will give you a parcel for Mrs. Macdonald; and tell the groom to take the horses to the north gate—it will save the turnpike."

"It is by much the nearest way," replied Elijah, who was a little ashamed of his master's parsimony, and considered it a point of honour to conceal it as much as possible.

When Macdonald had mounted his horse at the north gate, the groom stood with his hand on the bridle, shifting from one foot to the other, and touching his hat with rather a comical air of expectation.

"Thank you, my boy; that will do.—Soho!

be still, I say.—You are a fine lad. How old are you?—Come along, Elijah."

Elijah lingered behind.

"Here, Tom, here is a shilling for you from my master: I had almost forgotten it."

CHAPTER X.

“ One has false curls, another too much paint,
A third—where did she buy that frightful turban?
A fourth’s so pale she fears she’s going to faint,
A fifth’s look’s vulgar, dowdyish, and suburban.”

Byron.

IN the mean time, Arleston Castle was crowded from morning to night with successive shoals of visitors. Five barons, three earls, a viscount, and a duke; baronets by tens, and the clergy by hundreds; squires, attorneys, and the middling gentry, a multitude whom no man could number.

Lord William had not hitherto commenced a regular canvass, but, in arranging preliminaries with his committee, and paying and receiving

visits among the leading members of the party, his duties had been sufficiently laborious.

On the whole, the great men of the county were pleased with his address. But there was another class whose good opinion he was more anxious to obtain.

When he had abused reform with the Duke of Ulster, who returns eight members to parliament, and retrenchment with the Earl of Yelldersley, who has six sons in the army,—when he had ridiculed the whigs with Sir Walcheline Devereux, whom they have disappointed of a peerage, and cursed the political economists with Roland Conyngham, the rich East Indian director,—when he had talked of oats with Sir George Rivers, and of dogs with his son,—when he had listened to Otho Corbet's anecdotes, and asked Wortley Jerningham's advice,—he felt that their friendship was only half secured ; for had not they sisters, and mothers, and daughters, and wives ?

He did not require to be taught the first great rule in every canvass—whatever you omit, make sure of the women. And with the women I think even his enemies admit he was eminently successful. Lord William is good-looking, and that, with most of them, wins half the battle. By the way, I know a certain member for a certain city who has not the remotest pretension to any other qualification. But Lord William is not only good-looking, he is skilled in all the wiles that gain, retain, and rule the female heart;—that delicate flattery, those minute unobtrusive assiduities, that watchful courtesy, that gallantry, at once ardent and refined; the wit that diverts, without attempting to dazzle; the knowledge that suggests, without presuming to teach; just enough of folly to give zest to mirth; just enough of wisdom to justify respect.

With all his art, however, to confess the truth, he had no little difficulty with his female friends. To please such various tastes, and to pay due

homage to one, without the risk of jealousy in others, required the genius of a master.

The Earl of Yeldersley has three daughters, of characters the most opposite imaginable. Lady Lydia reads romances, Lady Lucy is a romp; he could neither sigh with the one, nor rattle with the other, for Lady Lucretia is a prude.

The Seftons were nearly as difficult to manage; for what mortal man in one short quarter of an hour could admire music with Lady Cecilia, books with Lady Sibilla, and horses with Lady Sophia?

Indeed, wherever he went he was met by this difficulty. Nothing is more rare than a similarity of disposition among the ladies of a family. Who could praise, in the same breath, the poetry of Corinna, and the science of Joanna,—Julia's wit, and Sarah's wisdom? Who could talk of pigs and poultry with Tabitha Talbot, without offending the delicacy of her niece; or mope with the honourable Mabel Mandeville, with-

out damping the merriment of the honourable Georgiana Joyeuse?

But over all these difficulties the genius of Lord William triumphed. He shall tell his own story.

The castle-bell had twice summoned the guests of Arleston to dinner. The company had assembled in the drawing-room.

The count was the first gentleman who made his appearance. His toilet was a most extempore affair. He was an accurate specimen of that strange monster an orthodox Jena student. For the benefit of the curious in wild beasts, here follows a description. His face enveloped in hair; long wiry ringlets hanging over his shoulders in most admired disorder; nails edged with ebony; a shapeless coat; a swinging gait; a braggart air. Take him for all in all, I never wish to see his like in an English drawing-room. The ladies Montfitchett shrank from his approach with no affected or unnatural horror.

One by one the others followed ; all but Lord William. The conversation flagged. The linen-draper tried to help it with an axiom, Harry Mowbray with a jest. It revived, wavered, and expired. There was a long unpleasant pause. The Reverend Dr. Malpas was in visible anxiety. Five minutes may ruin a battle or a dinner.

“Mowbray,” said the duke, drawing him aside, by way of occupying a few minutes, “your German friend is studying the British constitution, we must introduce him to our great economist.”

“The celebrated philosopher,” whispered his grace, as he proposed the introduction to the count, and drew him towards the scientific linen-draper.

The man of Jena was extremely vain of his knowledge of England and Englishmen.

“Doubtless,” said he, addressing his new acquaintance, “you are that celebrated aëronaut.”

The philosopher coloured to the ears, as he

confessed that his journeys had been hitherto confined to the earth.

“*Par hasard*, you are the proprietor of that magnificent theatrical establishment which bears your name.”

Harry Mowbray, who was exceedingly amused, stepped in to the philosopher’s assistance, and assured the count, that, at least in a literal sense, the man of science neither travelled in the clouds nor patronized theatrical exhibitions.

Such mistakes, continued he, are perpetually occurring to the best informed people. We should have an act of parliament against similarity of names. We all know that the French confounded Lord Goderich when he was chancellor of the exchequer with Robinson Crusoe, and it is not two months ago since I rescued the memory of Edmund Burke from a report which a Spanish gentleman was taking home with him, that the greatest of our statesmen had been hanged for murder.

No jest tells well before dinner. The duke himself, who is slow in all his motions, was impatient. Inquiry was made, and it was ascertained that Lord William had not returned from his morning visits. The glad signal was given, and the duke, with due respect, led forth the Right Honourable Ann Audley Arundel, in her own right, Countess of Flint, Peverell, and Cyvelioc.

As the guests swept in long line through the outer hall, they encountered Lord William.

“Very late, very late, young man,” said his grace with his usual pomposity: “you should remember that one of the first requisites of a member of parliament for the county is punctuality. Lucky we are all friends, Lady Flint.”

“Why, my dear William,” cried Lady Sarah Dunstanville, “there is blood on your face: where have you been—are you hurt?—any accident?”

“If you require a surgeon,” said Lady Martha

Montford, “let me recommend you to send instantly for Mr. Melchisadec Owen, he is the nearest, and delay in such matters is always dangerous. Besides, I can answer for his skill and his principles.”

“Thank you, Lady Martha—a thousand thanks, Lady Sarah—but nothing of any consequence has happened, I assure you, as I hope to show you by my appetite in a few minutes.”

The guests swept on to the dining-room, and Lord William retired to his toilet.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Pictures like these, dear madam, to design,
Asks no firm hand, and no unerring line;
Some wandering touches, some reflected light,
Some flying stroke alone can hit them right.”

Pope.

“ WELL, now, brother,” said the Countess of Rothsay, “ you have kept us in suspense quite long enough. Pray tell us what was the accident?”

“ I beg pardon, Eleanor, I quite forgot the accident in the first glass of this excellent Johannisberg. By the way, John, you know the history of the wines here, where did my father get it?”

“I believe we owe it to the count’s kindness,” answered Lord John, bowing to him as he spoke.

“It is from the cellars of my uncle Count Pfaffenstein,” said the German.

“But the accident, brother,” repeated Lady Rothsay.

“Oh! do tell us the whole story, my lord,” said Harry Mowbray; “from the mystery you make about it, I conclude it is quite romantic. Pray did you pass Gideon Cottage in your way from the county town? There is an ugly turn there. I should not wonder if we should discover that the accident was in that neighbourhood.”

“Which is Gideon Cottage?” asked Lady Burlington with perfect simplicity.

“Why that snug little brick house, about half a mile on this side of the town, with a vine half covering the drawing-room window, a huge

brass knocker on the door, and the name in large letters, Mr.—Mr.—I forget the name, really—do you recollect, my lord?"

"I remember the house you mean perfectly," said Lady Burlington, "but I do not think there is any turn thereabouts."

"But the story, the story," cried Horace Hopkins, "we shall not get it to-night if we do not press his lordship: there is certainly some cabinet secret connected with it."

"Really, Horace, I must answer you in the words of the Anti-jacobin.—Story! Lord bless you, I have none to tell, sir!—I was at Lady Brighton's about half an hour before four o'clock. I had sent home my horses, intending to walk across the park. Lady Cecilia talked so long about her anticipations of Rubini, and Lady Sibilla insisted on reading such a long passage from the *Undying One*, that I found myself too late. Lady Sophia offered to drive me here *herself* in her curricle. I knew it was at the

risk of my neck, but to have declined would have given mortal offence. So, recollecting that, though it was getting dark, the road was pretty good, I ventured to trust to Macadam and Providence.

“However, as ill-luck would have it, not ten yards from Wyaston-gate, something startled the horses, and Lady Sophia made a somerset in one direction, and I in another. Her ladyship got up in an instant, muttered a few words that sounded very like a curse, recovered her seat with a little assistance from her groom, and insisted on proceeding, as if nothing had happened. I had my forehead cut as you see, ruined my hat, and bruised my elbow, so I think I have very fairly won Lord Brighton’s influence.

“What *could* frighten the horses?” said Harry Mowbray, in profound meditation.

“The waving of a handkerchief, or some such thing, I believe,” replied Lord William.

“I am trying to collect from your description whereabouts the accident happened, continued Harry,—ten yards from Wyaston-gate,—was it on this side of the gate?”

“Why, you know we were coming from Wyaston.”

“I beg pardon—how very stupid I am!—ten yards on this side of Wyaston-gate,—why that is just at the door of Gideon Cottage,—how well I guessed!—Who could be so imprudent as to wave a handkerchief as you were passing, my lord?—And, so Lady Sophia proceeded *instantly*, as if nothing had happened. You did not solicit the hospitality of Gideon Cottage for a few minutes? Surely Mr. (what is his name?) must be a brute if he did not offer you any assistance, especially as the accident seems to have been caused by one of his own family.”

Whatever might be Lord William’s thoughts, he made no answer to all this bantering.

“Come,” said he, “you must make me some

return for my complaisance. I have told you one of my adventures, tell me what you have been doing in my absence. Have you had any more visitors?"

"Half the county, I think," answered the Countess of Rothsay, "and to judge by the way our visitors have spoken, your election is certain. We must not make you vain, by telling you all the pretty things that have been said of you to-day. Who would not be a county candidate to be the favourite of so many beauties? Lord Launceston is very envious—are you not, my lord?"

"Why, really, for a chance of half the compliments Miss Georgiana Joyeuse paid your brother," replied his lordship, "I think it would be well worth while to resign a peerage. But you must pardon me, if I cannot say as much for the praises of all our visitors."

"Who will give me the list?" said Lord William: "I long to know who these beauties

are, to whom I am under such obligations. Lady Burlington, will you favour me with your recollections?"

It was the signal for satire and scandal. One by one, the visitors of the morning ran the gauntlet of the company. Lady Rothsay, of course, as in duty bound, and the duke, when the conversation reached him (for he was explaining his own method of paying the national debt to Dr. Malpas and the philosopher), to the best of their abilities defended the absent. The defence, certainly, was very often in the style of Mrs. Candour, but still it was quite sufficient to satisfy decorum.

"In the first place, then," began Lady Burlington, her eyes sparkling with childish glee at the recollection, "we had such a queer party—a little rosy gentleman who wears powder and a pig tail, and a red coat with a hunting button, and top boots, and a funny little pinched hat; he carries a whip, with a long lash, and has a silver whistle, suspended from his neck; and he

blushes to the very point of his pig-tail, whenever you speak to him, and always looks as if he would run away if he dared—and a little punchy, bunchy, bobbing old woman that is continually reproving his awkwardness with the tail of her eye, and talks with amazing volubility, but as if she was afraid of stopping."

"I know them, Lady Burlington,—Sir George and Lady Rivers, as I hope to be a member of parliament."

"Right—and with them they brought my son Peverell—‘Don’t be frightened, boy,’—and this boy is five-and-twenty, if he is a day,—and my brother, Sir Charles Foster (‘the admiral,’ in a whisper),—and *such* a brother! only I wish he would not swear; I saw he sent you out of the room, Lady Martha, and if he had stayed much longer, I think I should have followed you."

"A bad habit," said Lady Rothsay, "but all old admirals swear; it was the sea-fashion in their youth. Sir Charles is a very worthy man, and

has done good service in his day. He lost a leg at Copenhagen, and an arm at Trafalgar."

"Yes," observed Sir Harry Mowbray, "he took care to inform us of both circumstances at least a dozen times during his visit."

"Do you know Sir George, Harry?" asked Lord William.

"I have known him from my infancy, as well as one can know such a shy old man."

"Pray, then, tell me, *can* he speak about anything but oats? I have nearly exhausted the subject."

"You must be a mighty favourite if he talks to you about any thing."

"Oh! we are great friends, and his son Peverell is my sworn brother. I have cured his dog Cato, whose case was pronounced desperate by his father's gamekeeper."

"Lady Rivers is most enthusiastic, at least most voluble in your praise."

"I believe I won her ladyship's heart by in-

structing her in a new method of making Stilton cheese, for which I was indebted to a worthy lady in the neighbourhood."

" Stilton cheese !" said Harry Mowbray, as if speaking to himself—" what did I see about Stilton cheese in the newspapers the other day ? Yes—it was the Agricultural Society of the county—a prize, to—I beg pardon, my lord duke, but if I may venture to interrupt Dr. Malpas for a single moment, will you be so good as to tell me, whether you happen to recollect who gained the prize for Stilton cheese at the last meeting of the Agricultural Society ? I know your grace takes a deep interest in the dairy department."

" The prize for Stilton ? I remember perfectly. We had no hesitation. I was present myself—never tasted a better cheese in my life—I *do* take the deepest interest in the dairy department. The prize was unanimously adjudged to the dairy-maid at Gideon Cottage."

“ Gideon Cottage again !” exclaimed Harry in affected astonishment—“ I thought we had left it for the evening. How singular that the best Stilton should be made at Gideon Cottage !”

Lord William looked very much annoyed, but said nothing.

“ In the second place,” continued Lady Burlington, “ we had the high honour of a visit from the Earl and Countess of Brandon, the Lord Viscount d’Estonteville, the Lady Berengaria Brandon, and suite. Oh what a parcel of pompous old fools ! Harry Mowbray, do you give Lord William some idea of them—I am sure I cannot. Have you ever seen the Brandons, my lord ?”

“ Never, but I know them well by character. Lord Brandon is a most upright, amiable, and accomplished nobleman.”

“ And has a good deal to say in this county, my lord,” said Harry. “ Of course you must speak well of your friends, and to say the truth,

they deserve it, for they talk well of you. The earl condescended to say, that you were, in every respect, a young man of unexceptionable principles, a rising statesman, and so forth, with many additional praises, which would pain your modesty to hear. But the important part of the harangue was, that you should receive his support. In all this he proved himself, for once in his life, a man of sense; nobody ever doubted his honesty. But really, with all due respect to your friend, I do think Lady Burlington's description is pretty accurate.

“ Two carriages, attended by outriders, and all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious travelling, brought them from Otterbourne Castle a short half mile. The carriages of preposterous dimensions, of all colours in the world, were of a *deep red*, blazoned with the arms of Brandon and d'Estonteville, in every corner into which they could be thrust. The first carriage stopped: a footman, fainting under a mass of gold, handed

out the Right Hon. Elizabeth Augusta, and so forth, a Tudor by birth, a Brandon by marriage, a duke's daughter, and an earl's lady,—and looking as if all these honours were written on her forehead. Then the earl himself, as important, but less dignified, striving, with visible effort, to seem in every motion a privy counsellor by right. The compressed lip, the gathered brow, the slow and measured step, might be detected to be artificial. It is clever acting, I admit. Then the Reverend Dr. Craven Conyers—certainly the most preposterous of all God's creatures—aping the earl, in all his gestures, whenever his eye is turned, ducking to the dust, whenever he is honoured by a look from his lordship. The second carriage opened and Lady Berengaria Brandon descended. It is a pity to see so much beauty spoiled by such insufferable pride. And of what, after all, are these people proud? They are neither the first in power, nor in wealth, nor in rank, nor in talent, nor in fashion, nor in fame,

neither the first, nor among the first. In descent, our neighbour the Baroness de Cantilupe beats them by three centuries. They are of a proud race—it is in the blood—God knows how it got there. Viscount d'Estonterville, unless I mistake his character extremely, is not proud, though he has a great wish to be so. He is only shy. The two qualities are inconsistent. A shy man is afraid the world should not think well of him; a proud man does not care for the opinion of the world. The viscount has more of his father than his mother in him, but he has not yet learned to act pride skilfully. Among other mistakes in this art, he allows his love of flattery to be too evident. Only compare, for instance, the way in which the earl receives the homage of the Reverend Dr. Craven Conyers, with the air of gracious satisfaction with which the viscount listens to the doctor's nephew, the Reverend Buckingham Forester. The style of flattery adopted by these two gentlemen is very dif-

ferent. The young man seldom assumes that expression of profound awe and abasement with which his uncle is grovelling on his way to the mitre. As to the female toadies——”

“Why, Harry, Harry, Harry,” exclaimed more than one, “are you dreaming? what is all this?”

“Pray do not preach any more about these Brandons, my dear fellow,” cried Lord William, “by your account they are bores, and if you talk any longer on the subject, you will not be much better yourself. Lady Burlington, you must not choose any more substitutes. You give a much more amusing account of the visitors yourself. Pray let me know what other people you had with you, and let us forget the Otterbourne party for the present.”

“Who came next, my dear Lady Rothsay?” said the Countess of Burlington. “There were so many——Oh! the Clintons, the Earl and Countess of Yeldersley, and your friends Lady Lucretia, Lady Lydia, and Lady Lucy, of whom

you gave us such an amusing description yesterday. I need not say much about them. We found you correct to the letter. The earl exactly that bustling vulgar little man we expected,—the rings, and the chains, and the seals, as brilliant as you drew them, but you forgot the lace ruffles. The countess, most nauseous with her unskilful, unmerciful flatteries. Lady Lucretia upright and demure, glancing askance at every one who laughed, with a most vinegar aspect. Lady Lydia—but I must not abuse *her*—she fell in love with me at first sight, and looked all the time as if she was going to propose that we should swear an eternal friendship, like the ladies in the Anti-jacobin. Then, Lady Lucy, the romp—Oh ! Lady Lucy !—she is Constance Montfitchett's friend—you must ask her for a description.”

Lady Constance shuddered.

“ The Earl of Yeldersley has an unfortunate manner, certainly,” said the duke, who had con-

cluded his dissertation on the national debt, “ and his family have peculiarities ; but this I must say, he is a true-hearted constitutional tory, a character which is more rare in this country than it once was. The smallness of his income, and the number of his family, oblige him, poor fellow, to economize, and he has not been in London for many years, but his vote is always at the command of the right side.”

The count, who was always on the watch for a lesson in the mysteries of the British constitution, awoke from a reverie, in which he had been plunged during the discussion of meaner subjects, and requested to know how Lord Yeldersley could give his vote when he was absent from London.

Horace Hopkins, apparently feeling for his ignorance, whispered audibly,

“ Privilege of the peerage in this country —palladium of the constitution—invulnerable distinction of the aristocracy.”

“But I do not understand,” persisted the count: “your chamber of peers is a deliberative assembly.”

“Undoubtedly,” said Horace.

“The vote is taken immediately after the debate, too, is it not?”

“Instantly.”

“The absent peers, then, are ignorant of what has passed in the assembly when their votes are tendered?”

“There are many apparent anomalies in our constitution,” interrupted the philosopher, interfering in the discussion, “but it works well, that is the true test—it works well.”

“But surely,” repeated the obstinate German, “in a *deliberative* assembly, if ever a single vote is given in absence—?”

“A single vote!” cried Harry Mowbray, who had listened with great glee to this dispute, and determined to fan its expiring embers into a flame—“the *majority* of votes is often composed of proxies.”

“ Proxies ! proxies !” muttered the count, puzzled by the word.

“ Yes; that is,” said Harry, “ the majority of votes in this deliberative assembly is often composed of votes, tendered on behalf of men who were not parties to the deliberation. The question, for example, is Catholic emancipation ; a question of vital importance to the welfare of the state. The debate lasts one, two, or three evenings; all the talent of the resident peers is engaged on one side or the other. The mover opens by lamenting his inability to do justice to so difficult a subject : he brings forward a host of arguments, some of them probably old enough, ~~but~~ some certainly new, all, if possible, presented in a new form. The debate proceeds. His new arguments are met by new answers, and these call forth replies equally original. Many profess to be still in doubt. Questions are proposed, on the result of which the querist professes to rest his opinion. Converts are made at the last hour.

The chancellor, as speaker, rises to put the matter to the vote, but amid loud cries of question: his grace the Duke of Lancaster, it may be, or the Marquess of Launceston, or the Earl of Burlington, or my friend here, the Earl of Rothsay, if he happens to be one of the sixteen, rises in his place, and in the happiest strain of wit, eloquence, and logic, ridicules and refutes all that has been urged in the course of the evening against the measure which he supports. There is a pause; their lordships look at one another; the opposite party are almost inclined to move (as was once done in the House of Commons) that the House do adjourn, in order to allow time for the feelings of the audience to subside into that calm temper which is requisite in legislative decision. But the chancellor rises again. He is once more interrupted by several members, who beg leave to state, before going to the vote, that after the new views, and the new facts, which have been presented to the House by the noble lord, they

will feel it necessary to decline voting as they had intended. At length the chancellor proceeds to put the question, 'content or not content.' Our friend's speech has been completely successful with the peers who are present. A majority of these peers is with him. But then, there are six noble lords measuring the Parthenon at Athens ; there are seventeen attending the opera at Naples, or roaming through the galleries at Florence ; there are a score in the hells at Paris ; there is one on the summit of the Alps, and one on the summit of the Andes ; there is an old nobleman in Northumberland, who has the gout ; and a young nobleman at Cadiz, who is in love ; Lord A. has been appointed governor of the Leeward Islands, and Lord B. has been persuaded to take the odds against Eclipse. Now the eloquence of our noble friend cannot reach across the broad Atlantic, or even gain converts on the race-ground at Doncaster. The consequence is, a majority against his measure. You see I state fairly the evils of

the system. I conceal nothing. It has practical evils, undoubtedly. But then, who would weigh these paltry inconveniences against the great privilege of proxy?—a privilege that is coeval with the power and glory of the British empire—a privilege which reflects its brightest lustre on the coronet, and gives its firmest stability to the aristocracy—a privilege which was purchased by the blood of our ancestors, and which our remotest posterity will claim from us unimpaired."

"The very idea is sacrilege," said Mr. Horace Hopkins; "in these days, when '*the toe of the peasant doth gall the kibe of the courtier*' so confoundedly, we must uphold, with the greatest care, every distinction between the higher and lower ranks. I have always said, and it is my unalterable opinion, that we of the upper classes among the Commons should defend the most minute privilege of the peerage, for our own sakes. Once permit intrusion on the nobility of

the coronet, or the sanctity of the lawn, and you run the risk of being yourself confounded with all the riff-raff of the middle classes."

"The true test," repeated the learned linen-draper, "the true test is, that the right of voting by proxy *works well*. As long as the system works well, all theories which militate against it are absurd."

The German was silenced, but not convinced. Harry Mowbray seemed to enjoy his air of doubt and perplexity extremely.

"To return to the Clintons," continued Lady Burlington, who was growing rather tired of this political discussion, "they brought with them a certain Mr. Osbaldiston, with whom Mr. Hopkins seemed mightily taken, and a Mr. and Mrs. Pierrepont, who were very attentive to Lord Launceston."

"How can you be so cruel as to recall that man to my recollection, Lady Burlington?" exclaimed the sensitive Mr. Hopkins. "I thought

I should not have survived his odious familiarity."

"An old friend, I think he said he was," replied her ladyship; "had known your father: I did not hear all that passed between you in that window. He held you by the button for nearly half an hour. He seemed to have a great many inquiries, and was talking a great deal about old times. Pray, who is he?"

"Really," said Hopkins, with some confusion, "I know nothing about the man; I may have met him before; for, however careful we may be, it is extremely difficult now-a-days to keep out of the way of vulgar people. The middle classes really are insufferably impertinent."

"Did not he say he knew your father?" persisted the countess.

"I hardly know what he said; I was too anxious to get away from him."

There was a slight smile on Harry Mowbray's lip, so slight as scarcely to be perceptible, and as

transient as slight, which, to the initiated, might seem to hint that, if Mr. Osbaldiston knew their friend's father, he had the advantage of most people.

“ And the Pierreponts,” asked Lord William, “ what of them? What do you say of them, Launceston? since I am referred to you. I have not heard the name. I must not omit any body in the canvass?”

“ Lady Burlington is jesting, my lord,” replied the marquis; “ three words did not pass between us.”

“ You ungrateful man! I never saw any body more caressed in my life. And all those questions about last season—Almack's, and the opera, and the French actors—have you forgotten all? and the pressing invitation to Ambresbury? and how you used to romp with little Ann, ten years ago?—oh, for shame, for shame, you faithless man!—Lady Constance, you heard it? Lady Mabel, you have not forgotten? I hope your

brother's memory is not so bad. He had a long confidential whisper with Mr. Pierrepont."

"What sort of person is he, Raymond," said Lord William, "if I may ask?"

"The man snuffs," replied the exquisite, with most ineffable disgust.

"I can tell you the nature of Mr. Pierrepont's confidential whispers," observed the Marquis of Launceston; "he favoured me with one or two in the course of the visit. You saw him take me aside a few minutes before their departure, with a most important face. It was to inform me, in a tone which might have done justice to a change of ministry, that the thermometer was thirty-two in the shade."

In a similar tone they criticized the other visitors, from the Reverend Malachi Melville, the squinting Boanerges of the baptists, to his grace Henry, Duke of Ulster, and knight of the garter, the representative of the princely house of Tudor.

In praise of one party alone, the voice of the company was unanimous. The Joyeuse family, indeed, are universal favourites. Lord de Querci's courtesy, Lady de Querci's grace, the daughter's playful mirth, by which no one is fatigued, the son's good-natured satire, by which no one is offended, are irresistible with all. Lady Sarah Dunstanville forgave his lordship for voting for the Catholics. Lady Martha Montford remembered that he had spoken against the test acts. Horace Hepkins breathed freely in their presence. The delicacy of the Montfitchetts felt no wound. The heiress forgot her millions, the philosopher his paradoxes, Lady Rothsay her plots; even Mowbray's satire lost half its virulence, and Ann Audley Arundel, Countess of Flint, Peverell, and Cyvelioc, thawed at their approach.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Blame, cynic, if you can, quadrille or ball,
The snug, close party, or the splendid hall,
Where night, down stooping from her ebon throne,
Views constellations brighter than her own.”

Cowper.

THE ladies had retired, as is the custom in this ancient realm of England—a custom rather honoured in the breach—but no matter. In these revolutionary times I am far from recommending any change in our habits, even the most minute. There is no saying how far the example might lead. If we admitted females to our counsels at the board, some radical might propose that they should be admitted to our counsels in the cabinet.

The ladies had retired. The gentlemen closed their ranks, and prepared to be as dull as all male animals are in the absence of the female.

Fair reader—for let me hope that I, too, may find readers in that gentle sex, to whose service I have dedicated my youth—fair reader, this chapter is not meant for you. Think it no treason to your rightful sway, if, for a short time, and truly with no willing pen, I assay to paint that tedious hour which, in England, is never gladdened by your smiles. Hurry over the leaves, they can give you no amusement; and if my readers of the ruder sex dislike the picture, let them ask their own hearts whether the reality be not still more disagreeable. Was sermon ever preached, or quarto published, half so heavy as that hour's discourse? and, oh! the anguish when your disgust has reached its acme, to hear the light echo of a laugh in those happy upper regions into which you dare not penetrate.

The ladies had retired. The gentlemen moved

upwards. Harry Mowbray found himself next the count.

“ You rode out this morning,” said he, addressing him, “ may I ask in which direction?”

“ The duke recommended it to me to pay a visit to the fortress while I am in this part of the country. All foreigners should see the fortifications. They are perfect. The armoury, too, is worth seeing. It is kept in admirable order. They told me five thousand men might be accoutred in an hour.”

“ You have studied the military art?”

“ I know little or nothing of it. I must take much that I am told about the strength of the walls, and the value of the armoury, on trust. But I had great pleasure in my morning’s visit, notwithstanding. My pleasure was of a moral nature.”

“ I do not exactly understand—”

“ Yes, of a moral nature. When one contemplates, said I to myself—when one contem-

plates the strength of these fortifications, and the resources of that armoury, with what delight one remembers their purpose and effect ! In my own unhappy country, I cannot see a fortress without shame, or a soldier without a sigh. But these tremendous mounds, that wall bristling with cannon, and that immense and brilliant pile, are not the strongholds of despotic power, but the bulwarks of a nation's freedom. In this most favoured land, the sovereign authority is in the people, and all things, therefore, by which that authority is upheld, are doubtless in the hands of the people. The reflection filled me with pleasure. I am a citizen of the world. I rejoice in the blessings of the great British nation."

"Sovereign authority in the people!" muttered the Rev. Dr. Malpas; and he shook his head with a very serious air, as his eye caught that of the learned linendraper.

"In the hands of the people, my good sir? God forbid!" cried Harry Mowbray, with pre-

tended earnestness. “ By our laws, all castles and fortresses within the realm belong to his most gracious Majesty, William the Fourth. Not only so—the whole navy, the whole army, and the whole militia, in a word, the whole military force of the British empire is under his control. Indeed, it is necessary that he should have this power, for he alone may declare war against foreign nations, as he alone can conclude peace, or contract treaties.”

The German sat in utter amazement as these strange truths were pronounced with great emphasis and rapidity in his ears.

“ You seem to think I mistake the extent of the royal prerogative in this respect,” continued Harry ; “ but do not trust to my account ; read what Blackstone says about the authority of the king.”

“ How, then, are the private rights of the subject protected ? It would seem that a monarch, possessed of impregnable fortresses and

numerous armies, could find no difficulty in assuming the absolute property of the soil."

"Why should he use violence," interrupted Mowbray, "to obtain that to which he has long had an undisputed right? In the eye of the law, every acre of English ground is the king's, and no subject has any other than a modified and beneficiary interest in the land which he occupies. Read Blackstone again, the second and fourth volumes; I will show you the passages when we go up stairs."

"Come, Harry," said Lord Launceston, "this is rather too much; I thought you had given up Blackstone when you became a politician. At all events, pass the wine. Lord William would have told you to do so, half an hour ago; but he did not like to interrupt the torrent of your eloquence."

But the disputants were too deeply engaged in their discussion to pay attention to this rather

broad hint. Mowbray was quite delighted with the amazement of the German, who continued to attack him with remonstrances.

“What then hinders King William from seizing this castle, or turning all that fertile valley into one great park for his princely pleasure? Your tribunals may be, as I believe they are, inclined to do justice to the poorest; but, if the soil be the king’s, who shall sue him for taking that which is his own?”

“Sue the king!” almost shouted Mowbray, in affected horror and astonishment. “Good God! why, my dear count, from him alone all jurisdiction emanates. Before whom would you sue him? The judges are only his representatives. For what could you sue him? In the eye of the law the king can do no wrong. In the eye of the law the king cannot even imagine that which is wrong. In the eye of the law, there is not the smallest weakness or imperfection

in a single thought, word, or action of the king. Do allow me to show you a few passages in Blackstone when we go up stairs."

"Read the whole chapters, count, if you have leisure, not single passages. You will not find Blackstone so extravagant in his doctrines as my friend Mowbray would have you suppose." So said the marquess, in a quiet tone, but with sufficient emphasis; for he did not like the system of merciless quizzing with which Mowbray perpetually pursued the unfortunate German.

Harry, who has some common sense, saw that, in gratifying his splenetic humour, he was making himself a bore to most of the company. He accordingly changed the conversation.

And now every one in turn mounted his favourite hobby. The duke descended at large on hospitals, rail-roads, the national debt, and the agricultural society. The philosopher dogmatized on the true theory of population. Dr. Malpas instructed Lord Launceston in the mys-

tery of oyster patties. Lord Launceston was profound on the antiquities of wines. The Earl of Burlington obtained a few hints from Lord John Plantagenet relative to a recent discovery, which had created an extraordinary sensation in the civilized world. Well it might—it was a new method of tying the neckcloth—I believe the third *really new* method since the days of Chesterfield. Lord John had the high merit of this invaluable discovery. The count told wonderful stories of his feats with the bottle and the schläger ; of rivers of blood, and oceans of wine ; but, finding that such subjects were not within the limited comprehension of his audience, he gradually led the conversation to that other topic, which, during this most barbarous of English hours alone, is not yet entirely banished from the society of gentlemen. Nothing, surely, but insufferable tedium could permit an English gentleman to pollute his lips with its impurities. Let us draw the curtain.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ For gain has wonderful effects
T’ improve the factory of sects ;—
The rule of faith in all professions,
And great Diana of the Ephesians.”

Hudibras.

“ And ’tis their duty, all the learned think,
T’ espouse his cause by whom they eat and drink.”

Dryden.

AND now we may venture to approach the drawing-room. Arch glance, and merry smile, gay song, soft whisper, the harp, and the guitar, invite us. Bright hours ! ah ! doubly bright, but for the thought that the day is coming when for us they shall shine no longer. Beautiful being ! shall those locks of thine ever be gray ? shall that eye ever be dim ?

But to our tale. The heiress—for an heiress is a very pleasant person. The compliment is

not extreme. The fairest face, the most perfect form, a disposition naturally amiable, talents naturally rare—all I have seen again and again utterly spoiled, by the consciousness of wealth. I confess I am never more disgusted with any thing than with the fuss that is made about an heiress. I go to a party where I know I am to meet one, with a predisposition to hate her. Perhaps, therefore, I am not a very fair judge of her merits, but I generally find her at least as disagreeable as I expected:—not that I have any very serious objection to a wife with some fifty or sixty thousand pounds, or even more, if her temper be unexceptionable, her face tolerable, and so forth, if any such woman there be, of English birth. But, as a general rule, I avoid all ladies with more than ten. However, Miss Margaret Mary Turnbull, as I said, is pleasant enough for an heiress. The Ladies Montfitchett *can* be extremely agreeable. The Countess of Rothsay, as all the world knows, when her

political manœuvres do not interfere, is the most delightful of women. But, for my own part, of the ladies there at Arleston Castle, I prefer Lady Burlington decidedly. She is a mere child, it is true, but a child with whom I have no objection to pass half the evenings of my year.

“ We have resolved,” she said, as the gentleman entered—“ we have resolved unanimously, that the whigs have insulted the ladies of the county, by proposing such a candidate as that little deformed wretch Sir Edmond Mortimer. Here is his picture. What could tempt him to sit to Sir Thomas, or what could prevail on Sir Thomas to paint it, I cannot imagine. A little crooked hunch-back ! Lady Rothsay proposes that we should call a general meeting of the ladies of the district, and annihilate the whig party at a blow.”

“ A gallant suggestion,” cried Harry Mowbray: “ I will deliver their funeral oration, and

Dr. Malpas shall preach a thanksgiving sermon on the deliverance of the county."

"Thanksgiving sermons are often very troublesome," said the reverend doctor, roused by the mention of his name from a comfortable position which he had occupied beside the fire. "I remember when I held the curacy of Burton-rivers upon Avon, I was put to much annoyance by an order for a thanksgiving sermon. You must know there were nine of us, curates of adjoining parishes, who were in the habit of preaching Dr. Jortin's sermons. Each had a volume, which, when finished, he exchanged for another, beginning again with the first when the ninth was concluded, and so on in rotation. The arrangement was extremely convenient; I never had the smallest trouble. It was in the summer of 1815, shortly after the glorious battle of Waterloo, that we received an order for a thanksgiving sermon. I looked over

my volume very carefully, but there was nothing of the kind in it, from beginning to end. In this dilemma, I rode over to my friend, the Reverend Humphrey Josceline, at Little Oaks. His volume was also consulted in vain. We sent a messenger round the country, and called a meeting at Keddlestone. The emergency was great, and I confess I was utterly at a loss; so was my friend Josceline, so was Shirley, so indeed were we all. At last Dr. Craven Conyers, who was then curate of Newton-Brandon, and, as we all know, is a very superior man, a man of great talent certainly,—he will do honour to the mitre, to which I am glad to hear he is so soon to be promoted,—at last, I say, Craven Conyers proposed that we should take the leading article of the Courier, and, with a slight verbal alteration, introduce it towards the close of Dr. Jortin's shortest sermon. Conyers was so kind as to make the necessary alteration with his own hand, and the plan answered surprisingly!"

“ An admirable contrivance!” said Harry Mowbray, gravely. “ I presume you continued to preach Dr. Jortin’s sermons as long as you continued at Burton-rivers.”

“ Undoubtedly, and my successor still preaches them. The nine clergymen, alas, are no longer where they were, but I learned, the last time I was at Keddlestone, that Dr. Jortin’s sermons are still as much approved of as they used to be.”

“ I cannot sufficiently admire the convenience of the arrangement,” continued Harry.

“ It was indeed extremely convenient. Much better than the plan some people have of buying manuscript sermons. I will give you an instance of the danger of that practice. When I was a young man, I fell into the practice. I bought, by the pound, an immense parcel of manuscripts, warranted original. They were written in a fair round hand, which gave me no kind of trouble. I considered myself very fortunate in my purchase, and continued to preach the sermons for

half a year. One day, I had a visit from an old friend, who took a deep interest in my welfare, Dr. Danby, father of the Reverend Julian Danby, in this neighbourhood. ‘My dear Godolphin,’ said he, closing the door as he entered, and speaking in a whisper, ‘where did you meet with the sermons which you have been preaching lately?’ I told him their history, and was struck with horror when he told me, that they were filled with the most insidious attacks on the orthodox doctrines and discipline of the church. In fact, Dr. Danby had been privately informed, that if I continued to preach in the same manner, the bishop would be obliged to interfere. You may be sure the parcel was that evening committed to the flames.”

While Dr. Malpas was thus reciting the calamities of clergymen, Harry slipped aside, and drew the count into the library, to put Blackstone into his hands. From female society the German was always willing to escape. Be-

sides his numerous anecdotes about drinking, fighting, and *renowning*, and that other fertile subject to which I have already alluded, the count could talk of nothing but philanthropy and the British constitution. The sword, and bottle, and the Burschenschaft, were topics, he had the sense to see, not entirely suited to a lady's taste. About philanthropy and the British constitution, indeed, he talked every where, and to every body—at table, in a quadrille, at the opera; between the acts, at the French theatre, and in the pauses of the prayers at church. But, though not much given to unnecessary modesty, he saw that he did not produce a very favourable impression on the ladies of England.

Horace Hopkins was paying his devoirs to the Ladies Montfitchett, and the Countess of Flint and Peverell, by turns. Lady Sarah Dunstanville had a religious controversy with Lady Mary Montford. The duke was listening to Dr. Malpas; and Lord Raymond Montfitchett and Lord John

Plantagenet, vied with each other in their attentions to the heiress. These various circles had been arranged by Lady Rothsay with infinite tact. She wished to have Lord William to herself, without danger of interruption, and without betraying any undue anxiety about the approaching canvass.

The large drawing-room of Arleston Castle is one of those apartments for which I have a decided predilection—a long narrow hall—lofty—and with windows, that seem as if they had been dug out of the solid wall. The wall is more than twelve feet in thickness, and thus a deep recess is formed at each window, which will hold a little party of three or four very conveniently. Oh ! sacred to study and intrigue !—those delightful windows !—is there any pleasure, which this life has yet to give me, like that enjoyed in such recess, when I first turned the pages of Ivanhoe,—when I first trembled at the blush of woman ?

The Arleston windows are sometimes inconvenient, it must be confessed; as, when Miss Mary Turnbull began to talk about *that stupid Dr. Malpas*—when, lo! the reverend gentleman stalked forth from his retirement, with Dr. Kitchiner in his hand, and a glow upon his cheek. Such accidents will happen; but, with all their perils, I love the snug windows, notwithstanding.

The countess drew Lord William into one of these recesses.

“ Now, William, we must have some serious conversation about the canvass. Take the *Siamese Twins* in your hand, and pretend to read. I do not wish to seem anxious about your affairs. Our policy is to appear secure. Many will vote with us if they think we shall succeed, who would not do so if they had the least idea we were likely to fail. Do not look at me. Keep your eyes on the book as you speak, and turn the leaves now and then. You are not half a politician. Of

course you have seen the committee again. Give me some idea what sort of people they are, and how the parties in the county are affected. Sir Fulk Montacute, I hear, has ratted to the ministry. He is on Sir Edmond's committee ; but he will not do you much harm, if my information be correct. Come, begin ; give an account of your motions. You saw the committee ?”

“ I did. The majority, as was to be expected, are a set of thick-headed blundering blockheads.”

“ Of course, of course. Pray keep your eye on the book. Who are they ?”

“ To begin. There are the representatives of the two oldest families in the county, except the De Cantilupes, Sir Reginald Vipont de St. Lis, and Sir Vivian Chartres de Vere, red-hot ultras both ; so is Alberic Amundeville, of Amundeville, the reverend Humphrey Josceline, the greatest epicure, and the Reverend Oliver Shirley, the boldest rider in the county. I am told the three

first will secure the support of the best blood in the old tory party ; Josceline carries with him an immense squadron of shovel-hats ; and Shirley has undisputed sway over half the slang men in thirty parishes."

" So far, so well. Pray, is not this Alberic Amundeville a catholic ?"

" He is ; but a true tory, notwithstanding. Some of my friends do not like to see him put forward, but he has too much influence to be passed over."

" Well, go on ; I begin to have hopes."

" Why, then, you know, there are the Apsley men—I mean those who went along with the late cabinet. There is Roland Cunningham, who trembles for the East India charter. There is Hyde Basset, who believes that the whigs will emancipate the negroes. There is Francis Comyn, of the Bank. There is that clerical fop, Julian Danby, and that insufferable bore, Otho Corbet. Wortley Jerningham, I was given to understand, was sulky about something, I hardly

know what ; but I have gained his heart by asking his advice about every thing.”

“ Turn a leaf, brother, and pray do not look at me ; you are quite incorrigible, I declare. On the whole, I think your interest is pretty strong. Is not Devereux with you ?”

“ Yes, Sir Walcheline is the only whig among us hitherto ; that is, he *was* a whig : his family has been whig ever since the revolution. But as he says quite openly, he thinks it rather hard that, after voting with Fox, and Brougham, and, in fact, sticking by the party, man and boy, in the worst of times—after refusing all manner of offers, and making all manner of sacrifices, he should be neglected in his old age. By *neglected*, he means denied a peerage, for that, I understand, has been his ambition from his youth.”

“ We must make him Baron Devereux, of Devereux Park, next summer,” said the countess. “ I build a good deal on the chance of such support. The whigs have been so long out of

office, that their arrears of actual or imaginary debt must be very large. They cannot provide for all who think they have claims on them. There is our best hope. The disappointed suitors will be disgusted. It is easy to find or make a pretence for ratting, and we shall gain their votes. If you cannot look as if you were reading, brother, you had better come over to this side. You smile; but seriously, William, you have no idea how much sometimes depends on trifles."

"I commence the canvass in earnest to-morrow. I am most afraid of the Dissenters."

"Well, remember, Lady Martha has been at work in that quarter. She is really a very useful personage. That Osbaldiston, of whom they were speaking down stairs, is a man of some influence; he must be gained. To tell you the truth, the Dissenters will decide the election. I am certain of it in my own mind;—and I am afraid we are not likely to be favourably received by the greater part of them."

“ Surely you exaggerate their power.”

“ No, brother, I do not exaggerate it. We, of the old parties, on both sides, have been blind to the progress of opinion in this country. A terrible third party is rising into consequence, which will overcome us both.”

“ The radicals, you mean :—I have very little fear of Cobbett, Hunt, and their friends.”

“ No, William, I do not mean Hunt’s friends, who bawl for they know not what.—Depend upon it, there is a party rapidly forming, with principles at least as rational and intelligible as those of either whig or tory—a party as resolute as either—which in a short time will be stronger than both united. The great body of the Dissenters, in this county, are of that party.”

“ Whatever their influence may be, I am afraid we must trust them to Lady Martha’s care ;—perhaps we may rely a little on their jealousy of the whigs, with whom they have no desire to be confounded, or this Mr. Osbaldiston

may do something ; but really none of my friends can give me any assistance among them, as far as I am aware. For my own part, however, I am ready to do what you please—cant, whine, go to meeting, be baptized, if you think it necessary—only the weather is rather cold.”

“Indeed, my dear William, this is no subject for jesting. Your success, believe me, entirely depends upon these Dissenters ; and if you please, you know you can secure them.”

“I can secure them if I please !” repeated his lordship, not however without betraying some confusion to Lady Rothsay’s practised eye,—“ how can I secure them, my dear Eleanor ?”

“ You cannot be ignorant of Macdonald’s influence over them. He has but to lift his finger, and your return is certain.”

“ Well, and what then ?” inquired his lordship, after a short pause.

“ What then ?—Now what is the use of playing the hypocrite with your best friend ? When a

matter has gone so far, as to be openly joked about by Harry Mowbray, I think even the secrets of Gideon Cottage need not be concealed from a sister. But I do not wish to intrude on your confidence, William;—only remember, delay, at all times, is dangerous, and never more dangerous than now. Putting aside every other consideration, what connexion could be more desirable in every respect? Fortune, beauty, accomplishments, and, if you care about that, I can tell you, what I suppose is no secret to your vanity by this time, the girl loves you with her whole heart and soul;—but I beg pardon—I have no right to speak so openly—you have every right to judge for yourself. And, now that we have finished the *Siamese Twins*, let us join the Montfitchetts."

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Nor women’s sighs nor tears are true—
Those idly blow, these idly fall;
Nothing like to ours at all:
But sighs and tears have sexes too.”

Cowley.

SOME days had passed since Macdonald’s interview with Sir Edmond Mortimer, and he had heard nothing from him on the subject of the canvass. The radicals had called a meeting of their friends, to consider what part they should take in the ensuing election. Many of the influential Dissenters gave it their countenance. There had even been some talk of a third candidate, on the independent interest. To the surprise of his neighbours, the attorney had kept studiously

aloof from the consultations, which had been held by all parties. The wise men of the county observed, with a knowing nod of the head, that Macdonald knew what he was about, and was afraid to hurt his professional business by taking an active part against any body. Those among the Dissenters, who looked up to him as their oracle, were in considerable perplexity. When they sounded him on the subject of the election, he preserved an impenetrable silence, and, as far as they could learn, was determined not to interfere. A few blamed him for want of public spirit. Some complained that the man, to whom they had looked in all emergencies, was unwilling to give them his assistance at a moment when, by a judicious use of their influence, the middle classes in the county might hope to get the better of that aristocratic tyranny, to which they had been so long subjected. But the greater number, confident in Macdonald's prudence, and tried fidelity to their interests,

determined to follow his example in the contest, and to remain neutral with him, if he persevered in his resolution.

Since her return from town, Flora had only seen Lord William once. Harry Mowbray was right in his conjecture. The accident which occurred to Lady Sophia Sefton, and his lordship, had been innocently caused by her. During the few minutes that Lady Sophia had remained in Gideon Cottage, while her groom repaired a slight injury, which her vehicle had received, Lord William had found means to tell Flora, that he intended to pay her a longer visit next day.

Mrs. Macdonald confidently expected, that at that visit the important declaration would be made. Her husband inclined to the same opinion. What the young lady's feelings were, I cannot pretend to imagine. I do not think they were very unpleasant, and yet she was far from being gay.

Let us look into the drawing-room of Gideon Cottage for a moment. Very different from that of Arleston! The room is by no means large; the ceiling is not high. There are no deep windows, no antique furniture, magnificent in decay. But if, in exchange for grandeur, you can be satisfied with comfort, it is here—the soft chair, the luxurious sofa, the warm carpet, and the blazing grate. Neither harp nor guitar is visible; but yonder lies the flute, and here is a piano. And then, in that recess, let your eye rest an instant on the modest book-case, for use rather than for ornament, in which the venerable folios of the good old fathers of the dissenting church, severe but holy men, are mingled with smaller volumes in more brilliant dress—Foster and Hall—Cowper and Montgomery—the faithful among the faithless, the pure instructors of a scoffing age.

The day is stormy, and the snow lies deep upon the ground. Mrs. Macdonald sits by the

window, not unheeding the unfortunate travellers, whose business obliges them to be abroad. She scans every horseman that passes, wrapped in a rough great coat, or thick mantle, and battling with the blinding sleet. Her daughter, at a little distance, with her back to the light, is drawing, or seeming to draw. One side of the fire is occupied by Macdonald himself, in all the luxury of a loose coat and velvet slippers; the other, by a gentleman, enjoying the same luxuries, and bearing a very close resemblance, in face, voice, and figure, to his host. Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance Bailie Alexander Macdonald, one of the chief magistrates of a certain city in Scotland, the name of which, sundry good and sufficient reasons me thereunto moving, I mean for the present to conceal. He is the attorney's eldest brother. Being Scotchmen, they are gentle by descent. Their father claimed kindred with the ancient house of Glengarry—but their father was a tailor.

At the “head of Broad-street,” in the pleasant town of Stirling, they were born. While, in accordance with an old custom of the Scottish nation, and induced by hunger, or ambition, his younger brethren wandered across the border, Sandie Macdonald, the hope of the name, continued to pursue his father’s profession in the place of his nativity. Some labour, much saving, a little homely talent, and no little cunning, enabled him to rise above his father’s station. He emigrated to that other town, which, with your leave, shall be nameless. There he was still more eminently successful. His father had been a deacon of Stirling, Alexander is a bailie of a prouder city. His brother, Duncan, has gathered no little spoil among “oor auld enemies of England,” as we of the south were wont to be termed by the Scottish parliament; but Alexander is the richer of the two. He is a bachelor, and if I do not err, Flora will inherit the bulk of his property.

“ He will not come in this weather,” muttered Mrs. Macdonald, in a low tone, but not unheard, I think, by Flora, for she blushed deeply:

A horseman galloped up to the door, muffled to the eyes, and covered with snow. Even Mrs. Macdonald’s eye did not recognise him.

“ It may be—but, no—Lord William is much taller; and now I see him walk, I think he is lame. Who can it be?”

“ Nae vera wise man, I’se warrant him,” said the bailie, “ to be oot in sic a deevil o’ a day.”

A thundering knock followed, and then a pause. The stranger was admitted.

“ Shall I show Sir Edmond to this room, sir?” said Elijah, opening the door.

“ Show *whom*? Elijah.”

“ Sir Edmond Mortimer, ma’am.”

Macdonald and his wife showed evident signs of being annoyed. Flora, who had turned very pale when she heard her mother announce a stranger’s arrival, recovered her complexion.

“ May I come in?” said Sir Edmond’s voice, in the passage.

“ Come in, come in,” replied Macdonald, rising, and grasping both his hands warmly as he entered—“ welcome to Gideon Cottage.—My dear ! Flora ! it is Sir Edmond Mortimer,—they hardly know you in that cloak. And you are altered too, by the sun of Italy, not a little. Sir Edmond, allow me to introduce my brother,—just arrived from Scotland. You are very kind to come so far to see us, in such a day ; but the morning was fine, I suppose it deceived you. Allow me to remove this cloak ; and take a chair by the fire, you must be cold. Perhaps you would like to change your dress. Shall I ring ?—Well, if you are sure the snow has not penetrated the cloak, which, to say the truth, must keep one pretty comfortable, pray sit down. You must not think of returning to Wigmore to-night. My dear, give directions to have the blue room made ready—your *own*

room, sir—you recollect it, I dare say. Your *own* room, ever since your visits in the Eton holidays, when Flora used to romp with you in the garden, yonder. Flora, put away your drawings. You must renew your acquaintance with Sir Edmond."

She met him with an open, disembarrassed countenance, a smile almost affectionate, and a warm grasp of the hand which would have sadly outraged Lady Constance Montfitchett's ideas of etiquette.

He met her with a white cheek and a bashful eye, a groan half audible, and a hand that trembled as she pressed it. It was very foolish, and quite contrary to Lord Raymond Montfitchett's ideas of propriety: with whom, to betray, or, rather, to *feel* emotion of any kind, is the most grievous offence against good manners of which a human being can be guilty.

" You must excuse me, Macdonald," said he, " I cannot remain with you above half an hour. This is entirely a visit of business."

Macdonald, in spite of his habitual self-possession, looked rather uneasy :

“ Pray do not mention business *now*, Sir Edmond, I cannot permit you to leave Gideon Cottage to-night. After dinner——”

“ Indeed, my dear sir, it would give me very great pleasure, but I have an engagement at Wigmore this evening which cannot be postponed.”

“ Well, then, if it must be so, you shall have an early dinner, and then——”

“ Another knock—*this* certainly is Lord William—how very awkward !” thought Mrs. Macdonald.

The door opened, and Lord William entered, followed by the count.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Almighty crowd ! thou shortenest all dispute,
Power is thy essence, wit thy attribute !”

Dryden.

THE count's appearance was more than usually ferocious. His coat was torn, his face flushed and swollen, and his whole person displayed unequivocal marks of a recent scuffle. Lord William was not in much better plight.

“ Gideon Cottage, my dear madam,” said his lordship, “ seems destined to be my refuge in every calamity. My friend, Count Altenberg, and I have been rather rudely handled at Aberton.”

Mrs. Macdonald rose in some anxiety. Flora's agitation did not escape Sir Edmond's notice.

"Pray do not be alarmed; nothing very serious has happened after all. My friend, who is not accustomed to our habits, is a little annoyed by the usage he has received; but we, who know the value of British liberty, rather *like* an occasional excess, in order to be certain we have enough."

"Who were your assailants?" inquired Macdonald.

"A score of cotton spinners, apparently zealous friends of the Mortimer faction. They began with snowballs, which I should not have minded, but a shower of stones is no joke."

"My lord, permit me to introduce Sir Edmond Mortimer."

The candidates met for the first time.

"Most happy to make your acquaintance, Sir Edmond; I trust we may be good friends, though we are rivals on this occasion. Our families have

always been on the best terms, though they have taken opposite sides on every public question for half a century."

Mortimer bowed.

" I would not have you trust to your friends, the cotton-spinners, too securely, Sir Edmond, for they took a few words with which I favoured them in parting so kindly, that, if I may judge by their cheering, your influence in that quarter was somewhat shaken. I should not be surprised if they were to change sides, and give some lessons in practical freedom on the other side."

" They suld be sent to Bridewell, every mither's son o' them," said the bailie.

" My brother, my lord, Bailie Macdonald."

" You are not used to such disgraceful scenes in your country, sir," said his lordship.

" Na, troth ; you may weel say that. We're douce bodies north o' the Tweed."

" The only contested election at which I ever had the honour to be present was in Scotland,

and I must say, sir, that it gave me a strong impression of the order and good sense of your countrymen. There was not the slightest disturbance."

"In Scotland? I thought I had seen your face afore, my lord. Was it at Mrs. M'Gruer's, think ye?"

"I have not the honour of Mrs. M'Gruer's acquaintance," said his lordship, turning towards Flora, with whom he was soon engaged in conversation.

"'Od, I *have* seen that chiel somewhere, though," muttered the bailie.

"From what part of Scotland are you, may I ask?" inquired the count, who never allowed any opportunity to escape him, in his anxiety to add to his knowledge of British politics.

The bailie mentioned the name of the town of which he is a magistrate.

"In so large a city, *occasional* disturbance,

during the time of an election, is of course to be expected."

"Never onie disturbance, in my memory, sir."

"The population, if I recollect rightly, is one hundred and fifty thousand," continued the German, proud of his statistical information.

"There, or thereabouts, I believe, sir."

"A great proportion, to be sure, belong to the wealthy and respectable classes."

"The maist respectable in Scotland, though I say it, that suldna say it."

"But then, in a place that is the residence of so many distinguished men, you must often have more than one candidate, and, I should suppose, not unfrequently the keenest contests."

"'Deed, you needna expect onie ither candidate, as long as there is a Dundonald to the fore."

"From the warmth with which you speak,"

observed Sir Edmond Mortimer, making an effort to withdraw his attention from Flora and Lord William, “from the warmth with which you speak, I conclude that you have a friendship for the family.”

“ To say the truth, Sir Edmond, I’ve aye been a fast freend to the Dundonalds. I’ve lived in kittle times, when a man behoved to look baith afore an’ ahint him, an’ I’ve fund it a guid rule to stick by the Dundonalds. My brither there’s a whig, they tell me. Mickle guid may it do him. I’ve seen the whigs in, and I’ve seen the tories in, an’ I wish I mayna’ see the radicals in afore I dee ; but wha e’er was in, the Dundonalds were never vera ill aff in Scotland ; sae, come what wad, I’ve aye stuck by the Dundonalds. When I was a ’prentice lad, in a’ the rows and bickers, in the auld times, I aye cried, doon wi’ the black nebs, an’ up wi’ the hoose of Anniston ! When I first set up a wee bit shop o’ my ain, I put the Dundonald airms aboon the

door, and aye was ready to gi'e them a guid word wi' my freends in the cooncil. And when I got into the cooncil mysel', I didna turn my back on the family, for, to gi'e them but their due, auld Hairy never turned his back on me, nor his son neither. Sae, in the warst o' times, I've aye stuck by the Dundonalds, and sworn by the Dundonalds, and threepit by the Dundonalds."

" The talents of the family have doubtless justified your support," said Sir Edmond, once more, with some difficulty, averting his glance from his rival ; " I do not remember to have heard much of your present representative's *eloquence*, but a man may be a very useful member of parliament without that."

" Oo ! as to eloquence and a' that, the toon cooncil are weel eneugh pleased wi' Willie, though aiblins he 's nae great orator. He minds the bits o' jobbies o' the cooncil, and that's eneugh."

" The council, I presume," said the count, " is composed of the most eminent men in the city,

since you attribute so much to its influence. Of how many members does it consist?"

" Twa and thretty, forbye your humble servant. We 've some vera respectable men amang us, vera respectable."

" Can so small a number, in *every* case, guide the determination of the other citizens?"

" The *ither* citizens?"

" Yes, the other citizens. What do *they* say to the Dundonalds?"

" De'il cares what they say."

" But, sir—"

" The *ither* citizens, truly.—Lord help you, sir, it's the cooncil sends the member. Bonnie wark you wad mak' wi' the hoose of Anniston, if onie body but the cooncil had the naming o' the member. Na, na, we 've nae radical wark in the north—nae universal suffrage—nae sprees, nae rows, nae riots at our elections."

" I think I have heard of such things at a Scotch election, however," said Mrs. Macdonald;

there must have been some foundation for the caricatures in the next room, which you brought us. If the count would like to look at them, I am sure they would amuse him. And do you come with us, bailie, you shall explain the allusions."

Meanwhile Flora and his lordship were still conversing in a low tone at some distance from the rest. In spite of himself, Sir Edmond's eye had fallen on them more than once. At first Lord William appeared to be relating some ludicrous occurrence, with which Miss Macdonald was extremely amused. By and by, their countenances assumed a graver expression. Flora was silent, her eyes were cast down: Sir Edmond imagined that she trembled. At this moment her mother adroitly drew the count and the bailie into the parlour. The baronet's jealous eye observed the manœuvre.

"I am at your service now, Sir Edmond," said Macdonald, taking the hint from his wife:

“since you are determined to go to-night, we have but little time, Lord William,” continued he, raising his voice:—“you will excuse my absence for a few minutes, I have some small affairs to settle with Sir Edmond. I have not yet rendered him an account of my stewardship in his absence.”

In an instant Mortimer recalled sundry reports, to which he had hitherto given no manner of credit. He saw it all. His heart swelled almost to bursting; but he made an effort to preserve his composure, and followed the attorney.

“*This*, then,” said he to himself, as they went down stairs—“*this* is the cause of Macdonald’s backwardness. He shall have no further annoyance on my account.”

They entered the library. His resolution was taken.

“My dear sir,” said Sir Edmond, speaking very rapidly, “our business may be concluded in a single sentence. I have been thinking over

the subject of our last conversation, and it has occurred to me, that your interference in this election may possibly be injurious to you, in many ways. I ought to have recollected your connexion with Sir Walcheline Devereux, Roland Conyngham, and various other gentlemen, who are the keenest supporters of my opponent. Then, again, many of the Dissenters, as you very justly reminded me, though with the greatest delicacy, certainly *have* a strong prejudice against a whig candidate. On the whole, I cannot help seeing, that, if you were to exert yourself, as I know you wish to do, on my behalf, you might do yourself material injury in your profession."

"I beg, Sir Edmond, that no such consideration may be supposed to weigh for one moment—"

"I know your generosity, Macdonald," interrupted Mortimer, "but I must not suffer it to injure you. In short, I have made up my mind, and you must not be offended by my re-

solution, to request you to take no part, on my behalf, in the approaching contest."

"Your extreme kindness," began the attorney—but the baronet would hear no more. He seized his hat, and in a few minutes was on his way back to Wigmore. The storm raged more violently than ever, but he was unconscious of its violence; or perhaps the fury of the elements was rather pleasing to him than otherwise.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ ————— With track oblique
At first, as one who sought access, but feared
To interrupt, sidelong he works his way.”

Milton.

IN Lord William's absence, Lady Rothsay was indefatigable in her exertions, but there was one person still more indefatigable.

Simon Sillary was his lordship's attorney. Such, at least, was his nominal character. He had long enjoyed Lord William's most intimate confidence, and, indeed, advised every measure of his life. The other members of the family knew nothing of his history. He was extremely civil to them all, and particularly attentive to

Lady Rothsay. The countess is polite to every body; but a narrow observer might have observed that she was a little jealous of Sillary. In fact she did not like his superior influence with her brother. It was impossible, however, to deny the value of his services, and she was candid enough to do them full justice.

Simon Sillary was a mean-looking little man, rather deformed in person, but with features by no means disagreeable. He crept about the castle with noiseless step, joined without appearance of forwardness in every conversation, and ingratiated himself, without effort, into the good graces of every visitor. He scoured the country on a little brown nag, carrying messages and compliments to and fro continually—now closeted with this nobleman for hours—now dropping in at that lawyer's, as if by accident, he wormed himself into all the secrets, and gained half the hearts of the party.

It is not very easy to account for the rapidity

of his success. He had been utterly unknown to every body in the county when the canvass commenced. It could not be said that he flattered any one ; but no one conversed with him, without having his vanity sensibly gratified. He spoke very little, but listened most patiently. He had a different manner for all, whether the grave and courteous nobleman, the bluff country squire, or the sycophantish attorney ; but, to all, his manner was extremely modest, without betraying the slightest diffidence.

On the morning of Lord William's visit to Gideon Cottage, Simon Sillary was walking in the park at Arleston, with a gigantic hard-featured man, of no very respectable appearance.

“ Thistleton,” said he, “ this plan will not do. It is too open. Certainly, there is a great deal of reason in what you say, and, if the men we have to deal with were reasonable men, they would be very likely to fall into the measure. But the ultra-radicals in this county, and every

where, are a parcel of thick-headed, obstinate fools, who do not see their own interest, and, if they did, would not pursue it, at the sacrifice of a single prejudice."

"But, master Sillary, what can be more obvious than this, that the more they weaken these damned whigs, the more strength they will have in the county? There's not a weaver among them all that does not know that, in mere numbers, our friends are nothing. If they beat the whigs this time, they may have old Harrington, or mad Owen Tudor, or the blacking man, or the devil next time, if they like."

"All very true; but reasons ten times as good will never make them vote for Lord William. And then they are divided. Harrington, I understand, is determined to support Sir Edmond, and you know his weight with them."

"Well, you know best; old Beelzebub is a fool to you, Mr. Sillary, for plotting. What

must I do?—say the word; and Oliver Thistleton is your man.”

“ We must persuade them to start a candidate of their own to divide our enemies. If you could get Harrington put in nomination, we should be sure of success, for all the ultra-radicals would vote for him, and I think most of the Dissenters would rather have him than a whig. But I fear Harrington is determined, if not pledged, to bring in Sir Edmond Mortimer. He begins to have confidence in the ministry. In fact, Harrington is the only man of sense among them, except those who have a leaning to the Dissenters.”

“ Well, then, I suppose mad Owen must be the man, unless you think of suggesting *me*. God! I think Oliver Thistleton would cut as good a figure in the House as most of them. Why, my father was a gentleman—at least, if my mother did not lie; and the parish officers believed her, at all events.”

“ No, no, Thistleton, we have hardly come to *that* yet; though you need not despair; we

are in a fair way ; you may be member for the county of York before you die."

" It is Owen, then, that is to be the radical candidate this time, Mr. Sillary ?"

" Yes, you must suggest Lord Owen Tudor at the meeting, and, to make sure of his consent, be as violent as you please. You remember the old times, Thistleton—give it them in that way again ; you are up to the slang."

" Ah ! that's all very well, Mr. Sillary ; but do you bear in mind that our friends are not in Downing-street now-a-days ? Don't you think to bring Oliver Thistleton's neck into a halter, to gain other people's purposes. I will keep to the windward of the law *this* time, you may depend upon it."

" All right, Thistleton, and you are the man that can go as near the wind as any body I know. But you must leave me, for here comes a party from the castle, and we must not be seen together."

They were interrupted by the greater number of the visitors at Arleston, who had taken advantage of a pause in the storm, to enjoy the air for a few moments, and had walked in the direction of the gate, hoping to meet Lord William and the count on their return.

“They could not go far to-day,” said Lord Launceston: “this storm is a sad interruption to the canvass. I am afraid we shall lose many of those freeholders, ‘who would be wooed and not unsought be won.’ ”

“I prophesy they will go at least as far as Gideon Cottage,” said Harry Mowbray.

“Who is that savage looking man who is stealing away yonder,” said Lady Burlington: “I never saw such a ruffian in my life.”

“The gentleman was shaking hands with old Sillary, as we turned the corner,” observed Mowbray.

“A canvass does really subject one to the most intolerable degradation,” said Horace Hop-

kins, with a shudder, turning, as he spoke, to Lord Raymond Montfitchett, who answered him with a sympathetic sigh.

“A vote is a vote,” remarked Lady Rothsay: “we must not despise our friends. Really I did not see any thing very disrespectful in the man’s appearance. Some honest farmer, or tradesman, I dare say.”

At this moment Lord William and the count drove up to the gate. The party met them, and they were joined by Sillary.

“You have had a short canvass to-day,” said Lady Martha Montford. “I suppose you have not seen Mr. Osbaldiston, nor Mr. Melville, nor Hezekiah Henderson.”

“Had you time to see Lady Sophia Sefton?—she will expect you to call as soon as possible after the accident,” said Lady Rothsay—“and Lady De Cantilupe—really we have neglected her shamefully.”

“ You did not pass Gideon Cottage without claiming its hospitality again?” cried Harry Mowbray.

“ We were assailed by some cotton-spinners at Aberton,” replied Lord William to these inquiries, “ and as their attack was growing rather serious, we were obliged to take refuge at Gideon Cottage.”

“ Thank you, my lord,” exclaimed Harry, “ and God bless the cotton-spinners! I was so much struck with the odd accidents which always bring you into contact with Gideon Cottage, that, in a moment of superstition, I took a bet of five hundred guineas with the Marquess of Launceston, that something would conduct you in that direction this morning.”

Lord William took this raillery much better than he had taken Harry’s jests the preceding evening.

“ I suppose the cotton-spinners were on their

way to the radical meeting, in the county town," remarked the Countess of Rothsay: "this is the day, I believe;—is it not, Mr. Sillary?"

"A radical meeting!" cried Harry Mowbray. "My dear count, you must not lose the opportunity: you will see more of the true nature of British freedom at a radical meeting in half an hour, than you could learn in your chamber in half a century. If you are not fatigued by your exertions to-day, it will give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you to this meeting, and explain any thing which may need explanation, in the character of the company or the proceedings."

"You had better take care what you are about, Mowbray," said Horace Hopkins, "not to mention the disagreeable people with whom you will inevitably be brought in contact—I would not answer for your life if you are recognised."

"Indeed," added Lord Launceston—"indeed,

my dear Harry, Mr. Hopkins is right. The count may go safely enough, for he is not known ; but every body knows you, and I should not be the least surprised if you were stoned to death. You are not very popular, I am sorry to say, with the lower orders in the county."

" Pooh, pooh !" answered Harry, who was determined to accompany the count at all hazards : " I will wrap a red handkerchief about my neck, borrow an old hat, and look as like a blackguard as I can. The mail will pass in a minute or two, and the count and I will step into it. Do not wait dinner, for we cannot return comfortably to-night. We can get very good accommodation at the Tudor Arms."

At this moment the horn was heard.

" Lord John, pray have the goodness to tell my servant to follow us as soon as he can, with whatever we shall need for the night. Adieu ! —Come, count, we have no time to lose. No inside place ? Well, then, we must go outside.

I think the storm is over, and we have only a few miles. Adieu ! Lady Rothsay : Miss Turnbull, your slave. Hollo ! my good fellow—just stay one moment, coachman, I wish to speak with this old beggar—Hollo ! come here : have you any objection to change hats with me, my fine fellow?—no, now that I look at it, yours is *too* bad—there's a sixpence for you. I must buy an old hat at Aberton.”

The mail rolled on, and the rest of the company prepared to return to the castle. Lord William laid his hand on Sillary's arm. They were left alone.

“One moment, Sillary—I have seen Flora—my resolution is taken.”

“I was right, then, my lord.”

“You were.—There is no other resource. That scoundrel Cellini is capable of any cruelty, and, not to mention my other creditors, Tewkesbury, who is not to be trifled with, has my

character in his hands. Then this unexpected contest——”

“ The Conservative Association, my lord, will pay a great part of your expenses.”

“ They have promised fifteen thousand pounds, in case of necessity, Sillary, but, I much fear, that will cover little more than half.”

“ Your expenses, my lord, to my certain knowledge, will not amount to less than fifty thousand pounds.”

“ My father neither will nor can give more than his contribution to the general fund of the association ; but you may call at Dunstanville House, when you go to town, perhaps his grace may do something.”

“ I scarcely expect it, my lord : the Duke of Cornwall is fond of money.”

“ Then I have but one resource. Surely Maria will not be unreasonable ?”

“ Would it not be better to see her yourself, my lord ?”

“ I cannot, Sillary, I feel I could not say what must be said. One glance of those gentle eyes would quite unman me.”

Sillary turned aside his head, and smiled contemptuously.

“ No, Sillary, you must do it. Say all that we agreed on. The child shall be provided for amply. Do not forget that. Make any terms, tell any lies you will; but you need no instructions. The devil himself could teach you nothing.”

“ Seriously, my lord, you flatter.”

“ Well, about it speedily, since it must be done. To tell you a secret, I would not burden my conscience with this business for all the mines of Mexico;—but I love the girl.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Th’ admiring crowd are dazzled with surprise,
And on his goodly person feed their eyes;
His joy concealed, he sets himself to show,
On each side bowing popularly low:
His looks, his gestures, and his words he frames,
And with familiar ease repeats their names.”

Dryden.

ABOUT a mile from the small village of Aberton, there is a neat little cottage, about a stonecast from the road, with a bowling-green in front, and a skittle-ground behind. It may contain, perhaps, four apartments; and a head of the Duke of Ulster, which swings on the old oak, in front of the green, gives sign of accommodation for wayfaring men.

Harry Mowbray, who was on the watch for a text, from which to descant on the constitution,

in his usual strain, recognized it at some distance. He knew it well, for his father's gate is within half a mile of Aberton, but he chose to pretend ignorance for the occasion.

“A pretty little cottage, count—English entirely. It seems to serve the purpose of an inn, coachman.”

“Now and then, your honour, now and then. 'Tight little place, is not it?—Sends two members to parliament.”

“Two members to parliament! God bless me!—you joke, surely.”

“Joke?—why should I?—don't I know them both?—and drove down the electors, last election, to the bargain.”

“Drove down the electors?” repeated the count, whose curiosity was strongly excited.

“Yes, I did—four inside, and two out. There was Bill, my lord's footman, and Mr. Jones, the butler, outside; and the steward, and the attorney, and two sea captains, bastards of my

lord's brother, they do say ; funny fellows, and like the family, howsomever. Oh ! a rare day they had of it, I'll be bound—roaring drunk every mother's son of them.”

The radical meeting was held in the great hall of the Mechanics' Institution, Sir Nigel Harrington, of Ashley Park, in the chair.

It is a curious instance of human inconsistency, that those who make most pretensions to a philosophic disregard of the artificial distinctions of society, are often the very men who are most ambitious of rank in their own persons, and render it the most profound homage in the persons of their friends. The sturdy republican of the United States is peculiarly jealous of the precedence of office, and the most devoted disciple of Thomas Paine throws up his cap with double ecstasy, when a booby lordling descends to flatter those democratic prejudices which menace the existence of his order.

Sir Nigel Harrington is a baronet of ancient

descent, and splendid fortune, but he has other claims to the influence, which he has long possessed, over the small but violent party whose badge he has assumed. In theory he is a rigid republican. He believes that all the prerogatives of monarchy, and all the privileges of rank, are usurpations on the rights, and injurious to the interests, of the people. But he does not desire, even in his most secret thoughts, that remedy, sharp but speedy, which many of the faction almost openly demand for these corruptions. The most ardent friend of the crown and the coronet does not turn with greater horror from the crimes of revolution. He is contented with those instruments of change, from the use of which no man is debarred by law, confidently resigning the just cause, in which he believes himself engaged, to the slow but certain judgment of the great reformer—Time.

In his habits he is simple, but not ostentatiously

abstemious. In his manners, he blends, in no unseemly union, the open frankness of the republican, with the polished courtesy of the courtier. He spends a liberal income on his paternal estate, neither neglecting the just claims of the poor, nor wholly rejecting those elegant luxuries, which, if he does not think them befitting his rank, at least are appropriate to his fortune. Keen as his feelings are on political subjects, they are seldom suffered to interfere with his private friendships. Without attempting to disguise his principles, he associates with his equals in the county on the kindest terms. To crown his character: in all the domestic relations, he is distinguished by the warmth of his affection, though several members of his family are among his bitterest opponents; and while he never conceals, for an instant, his antipathy to ecclesiastical establishments, his piety is fervent without the shadow of affectation, and

his faith in all the *doctrines* of the church, without the smallest bigotry, at once humble and resolute.

I cannot think of him without recalling that affecting picture, which the widow of Colonel Hutchinson has left us of her husband—a man whose pure and manly character, to my mind, breathes a nobler spirit than any which the mad chivalry of the middle age, or the theatrical heroism of the ancient world, can furnish for our contemplation.

On his right hand sat Lord Owen Tudor,—a very different character.

Owen Tudor—for he declines the title which he might claim from courtesy—is the second son of the Duke of Ulster, and inherits a princely fortune from a maternal uncle. His wealth is greater, and his descent more illustrious, than that of any other commoner in the county. But it is his pride to hold in supreme contempt every advantage which he derives from fortune.

Owen Tudor sits at table with his servants, and assists them in cultivating the soil. His journeys are made on foot, and he sleeps on straw, or on the naked earth, as accident may determine. He is clothed in the meanest apparel, and confines himself to the coarsest food. But, in all this, there is not the least disposition to avarice. He spends his whole income in charities, often lavished with the most wanton profusion, on the most unworthy objects. A rough exterior and violent abuse of the upper orders are sufficient recommendations to his liberality, and are often used, with entire success, by the most abandoned profligates in his neighbourhood. His political opinions and conduct largely partake of the eccentricity which distinguishes the rest of his character—an eccentricity which can only be excused by supposing that his mind is under the influence of partial insanity. He professes the doctrine of inherent right, in all men, in all political matters,

to privileges absolutely equal. He is not quite insane enough to demand a perfect communion of goods; but he holds that all large accumulation of property is a nuisance which should be abated, and all poverty, below a certain standard, an evil which might be easily removed. He is not restrained by any horror of revolution, for, though naturally an amiable man, and, indeed, so delicately constituted, that he cannot contemplate any species of physical pain without extreme uneasiness, he has accustomed himself, in imagination, to all its atrocities, and almost takes pleasure in recalling their details. If he inculcate submission to the laws, which, to do him justice, is his uniform practice, he does not pretend that it is from any other motive than the utter hopelessness of resistance at the present moment.

To complete the contrast—he is at perpetual feud with all his equals in the county, and at open war with every member of his family, and

the wretched man is not only a bitter enemy of the church, but a blasphemous reviler of all the holy mysteries of the christian faith.

At some distance from the chairman, in a conspicuous part of the room, sat an old man with white hair, but a complexion remarkably fresh and healthy. His general expression was frank and open enough, and his bearing, with some of the roughness, had much of the bluff good-nature of the old English yeoman. But now and then, in the cunning sparkle of the eye, and the malicious curl of the lip, there was evidence of less generous feelings than those which ever found a harbour in that noble character, the proudest boast of merry England in her proudest day.

Such is the picture of the man who has enjoyed, abused, and wantonly abandoned the greatest political power that was ever wielded in this country by a single hand. Blessed with a strength of intellect seldom equalled, and never surpassed, with a rough and homely but most

manly eloquence, he has destroyed the influence of the greatest talents by repeated and unblushing tergiversation, by rancorous and indiscriminate abuse of all men and all parties in turn, by quackery the most undisguised, and vanity the most disgusting.

At a table in the centre of the room, Harry Mowbray was surprised to recognize the tall ruffian whom he had seen in Sillary's company in the morning. Thistleton seemed to be a man of importance. He was continually writing notes, which he dismissed, in various directions, shaking hands with one man, whispering to another, and nodding familiarly to a third.

Sir Nigel Harrington commenced the proceedings in a speech of much quiet dignity, not unadorned by a nervous eloquence. He was listened to with profound silence, and every other token of respect.

He began by a review of the progress of liberal

opinions of late years, and concluded with the following words.

“ The history which I have traced justifies me in predicting the speedy triumph of those opinions which all of us profess. One great obstacle, and only one, remains—the power of the boroughmongers in this country. If *we*, gentlemen, were strong enough to overturn that power, it would be wise to rely on ourselves alone—on *ourselves*, who clung to the good cause when despised, rejected, and defamed. It would be just that those who found no patrons in their persecution should permit no partakers in their triumph. But the hour is not yet come, though let us hope it is at hand, when we may fight our own battles with unassisted hands.

“ With these remarks, I leave the business of the day to those around me. You have assembled to deliberate on the course which you should follow in the ensuing election. Give an

impartial hearing to every proposal which is offered. But, above all, I beseech you to permit no personal jealousy to peril the great cause in which we are engaged."

John Franklin, a venerable yeoman, upwards of ninety years of age, proposed that they should give all their influence to Sir Edward Mortimer.

" You that know me," said he, " are well aware, that I am no friend to the whigs, and for that reason I wished much to persuade our good neighbour, Sir Nigel Harrington, whose sentiments I have known and admired from his childhood, to allow his name to be proposed on the hustings. I was quite wrong, for, as he has told you, we cannot carry the election single-handed. If we do not support Sir Edmond, Lord William Plantagenet will carry the day. Now, I would rather cut off my right hand than have Lord William chosen. I do not like the whigs, as I have told them to their face before this; but I believe they are determined to destroy the

influence of the boroughmongers. All my prejudices would lead me to oppose Sir Edmond Mortimer; but shall I permit any prejudice of mine to strengthen that influence which has been the worst curse of England for a hundred years?"

This speech was received with great applause by the majority of the audience; the motion was seconded, and the chairman rose to put it to the meeting.

He was interrupted by Lord Owen Tudor, who, in a strain of the most violent abuse, inveighed against the principles and conduct of the whig party, and concluded by moving a counter-resolution to abstain from all interference in the election.

Lord Owen was an especial favourite with a large part of those present; and the style of declamation in which he indulged was more suited to the taste of many than the chaster eloquence of Harrington. The temper of the

meeting appeared to waver. At this moment Thistleton rose to address the chair.

I despair of being able to give you any adequate idea of this man's mode of speaking, without pretending to rival Horace Hopkins in the delicacy of my habits. I confess I am not familiar with the slang wit, and brutal black-guardism, with which his oration was adorned. However, one large portion of the audience received it with loud laughter and riotous cheering throughout; and when, after a violent tirade against government, the whigs, the borough-mongers, the *snufflers*, as he termed the dissenters, and the *shufflers*, as he designated the moderate radicals, he concluded by proposing “*our old friend, honest Owen Tudor*,” to be the radical candidate for the county, that party rose as one man, and made the roof echo with their shouts.

The majority was evidently in favour of the resolution. Lord Owen's vanity was flattered.

He accepted the invitation of his friends amidst loud but not universal cheering. The dissatisfaction of a large part of the meeting was sufficiently apparent.

This matter was no sooner concluded than a cry was raised for the London demagogue who had favoured them by his presence. Sir Nigel, Franklin, and their friends, seemed to be extremely annoyed, and even Lord Owen gave the clamour no encouragement, but Thistleton and a few of the more violent redoubled their applause. At last the old man rose, apparently rather chagrined by the silence of the majority. He cannot but feel that his popularity, even with the lowest, is almost extinct. His voice, however, was firm, and his bearing confident enough, as he addressed the meeting in the following manner :

“ My honest people, labourers of this county, for such I see you are, I have some right to address you, for I have been all my life a

labourer myself, as my father was before me. What I have written, I have written as any of you might do, after his work for the day was over. I need not tell you what good these writings have done. If they had not been published, it is hardly possible to conceive the base and dejected state in which the nation would have been sunk at the moment I am speaking. I do not like to say so much of myself, but to do it appears just to the *cause*. I have often said, that if there had been a man in parliament to *speak* my pamphlets, England, at this hour, would have been free and happy. You have chosen as your candidate, and, I hope, in spite of the base boroughmongers, the county will choose, as its representative, a man who will not fear to do this daily. I have long had my eye on Lord Owen Tudor, and I know him to be above the trickery and fraud of faction. He is the implacable foe of corruption, and public robbery of every sort; and the performance of whatever

he is disposed to perform will not fail from the want of talents, of courage, or of constancy. In one word, my honest lads, you all know well that I have seldom been deceived in my predictions, and I predict that he will be the poor man's friend, in the place into which you wish to send him. It is a wicked place, full of thieves, and liars, and fools; but when Lord Owen Tudor is there, we shall be sure there is one man among them who is neither a thief, nor a liar, nor a fool. I will take care that what he does there shall be known. Do not trust to the bloody old Times, or any other newspaper. They are all sold to the whigs, or the court, or the boroughmongers. But, if a single word that your representative utters is suppressed, or misrepresented in my report, I will suffer you to tear the flesh from my bones with red hot pincers.

“ My good lads, I tell you nothing but the truth; you wish to send our friend to a bad place, where he will see none but bad people.

But he need not be afraid while he has my writings in his hand, and warm-hearted English-men like you at his back.

“ I hope he will treat some men there as they deserve. I will tell you what men I mean. First, there are the turncoat, double-faced whigs, the most profligate faction in a profligate parliament. Then there are the dirty, canting, cormorant Scotch, that have come from their own beggarly country, to rob, and cheat, and slander the English. Then there are the filthy economists. My friends, there is a parson of the name of Malthus, who has written a book to show that you breed too fast ; and in order to check your breeding, he proposes that, if you be married, you shall have no relief from the parish, but shall be *left to starve*. The Scotch and Irish place-hunters, who live, and want to live, on your labour, applaud this parson Malthus to the skies, and so do our pensioners and parsons ; but neither Malthus, nor any one of his crew,

ever proposes to check the breeding of the parsons and the pensioners. Now, I hope your member will tell these insolent ruffians a little piece of his mind. If he does not, I will. Lastly, there is the infernal race of boroughmongers. I have been calling out against their detestable crimes ever since I had a voice to make myself heard; and now, at last, people are beginning to listen to me. The base whigs are promising great things, and the canting Scotch thieves are talking about what they will do; even the bloody old Times is blustering about reform; but do not trust to any of them, my lads, if you are wise. Trust to me, and to yourselves, and take my word for it, there will be no boroughmongers in England before the next corn is cut."

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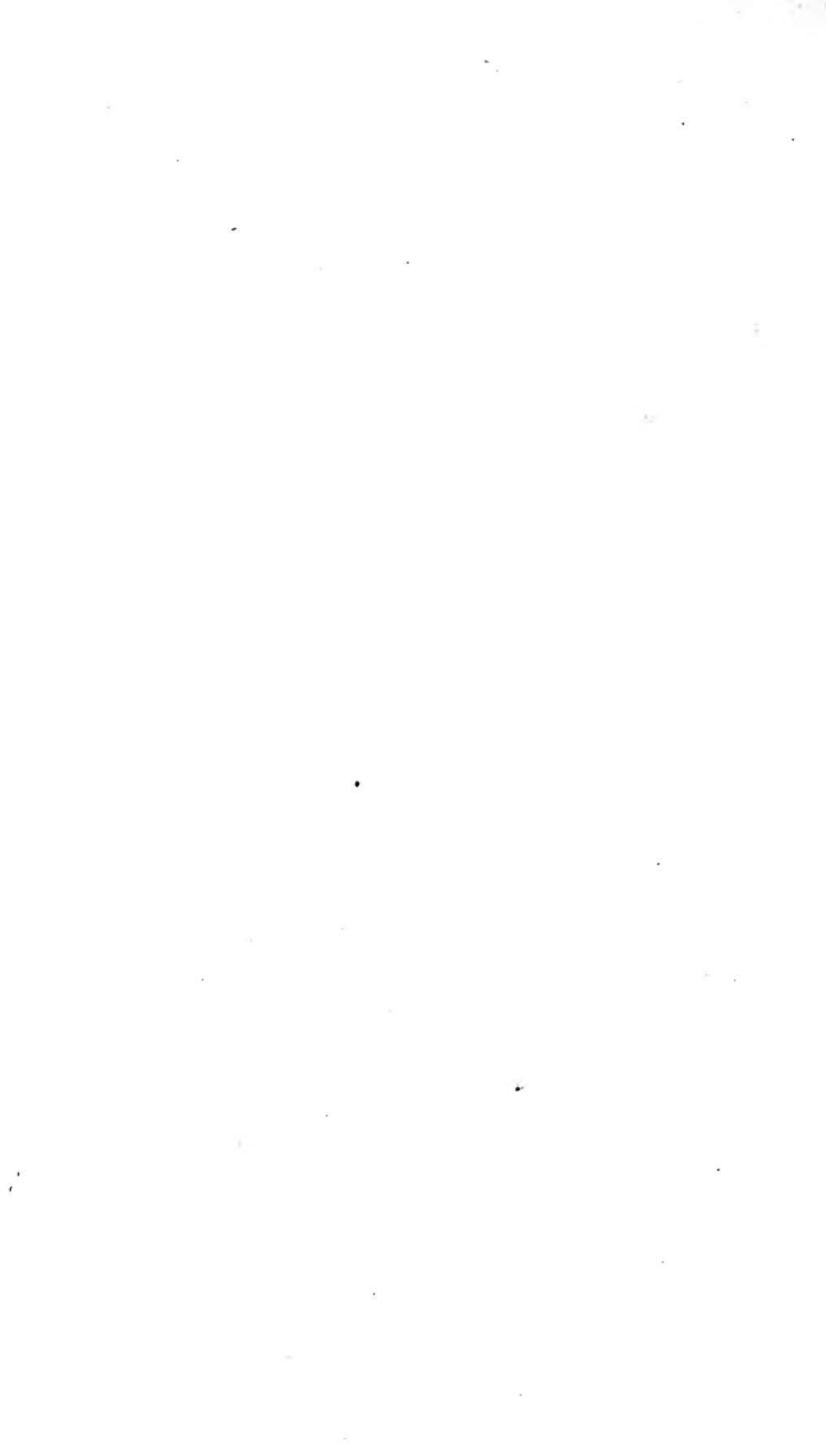
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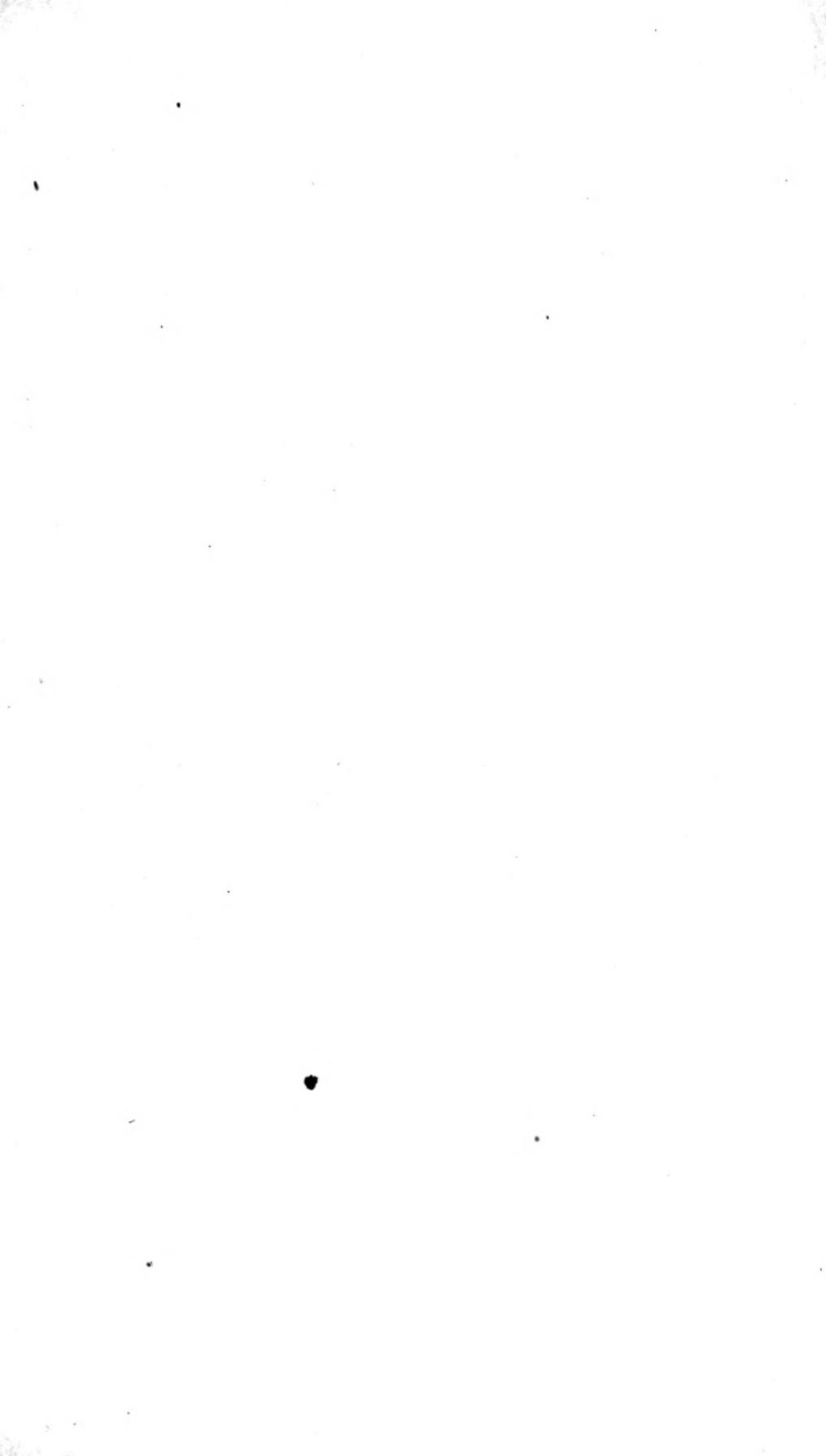
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